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HOME AS A PLACE OF WORK

Dissertation submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

The focus of this dissertation is essentially theoretical, and to do with concepts, assumptions and dualisms relating to 'home' and 'work'. These are seen as socially constructed concepts in a dialectical relationship with one another; to understand one it is necessary to understand the other. It is argued that the meaning of 'home', in particular, has been largely taken for granted and unquestioned. A method of interpretation, combining hermeneutics with a critical edge, was roughly followed; incorporated within this were the principles of grounded theory that would permit concepts to be developed from data.

A theoretical sample that clearly crossed the boundary between home and work - self-employed independents who worked from home - was targeted, resulting in twenty in-depth interviews. The contrasts between (a) an apparent sense of *autonomy* but lack of *legitimacy*, and (b) a relatively good work situation but poor market situation were related to the distinction between being in one's own house -and being self-employed - but being seen as 'at home'. There was found to be a contradiction between what were believed to be the generally accepted meanings of 'home' and 'work' and those of the group; whereas the former were not compatible with using home as a place of work, being a contradiction of one another, the latter were. In this situation, strategies such as avoidance of the term 'at home' and a tendency to use 'professional' were evident. A postal survey provided verification and some clarification of these findings.

The theoretical analysis draws on the way in which the separation of 'home' from 'work' resulted from a restricted and simplified model of the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment emphasis on rationality. Whereas work was associated with rational liberal economic and scientific values which expressed the legitimate Modern paradigm, home remained associated with conservative values and nature - the non-rational.



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## IN BROKEN IMAGES

He is quick, thinking in clear images;  
I am slow, thinking in broken images.

He becomes dull, trusting to his clear images;  
I become sharp, mistrusting my broken images.

Trusting his images, he assumed their relevance;  
Mistrusting my images, I question their relevance.

Assuming their relevance, he assumes the fact;  
Questioning their relevance, I question the fact.

When the fact fails him, he questions his senses;  
When the fact fails me, I approve my senses.

He continues quick and dull in his clear images;  
I continue slow and sharp in my broken images.

He in a new confusion of his understanding;  
I in a new understanding of my confusion.

Robert Graves

## INTRODUCTION

In a book entitled *The Home: words, interpretations, meanings and environments* (1995), Amos Rapoport, architect and eminent theorist in the field of environment-behaviour research, opens his article, 'A critical look at the concept "home"', with the assertion that:

'A term or concept is useful only if it is clear, well-defined, and only changes slowly and systematically as a function of the empirical and theoretical development of a field' (Rapoport 1995:25).

Having looked at *home* in 'popular' usage and in research, he comes to the following conclusion:

'The serious problems with the term home, which I have discussed, make its use so problematical that there does not seem to be enough potential in the term to persevere with attempts to improve it' (ibid:44).

He further concludes that it is 'not needed' (ibid:44), and that the concept of *home* can more usefully be split up into: activities, lifestyle and settings. In the Introduction to the same book, David Benjamin looks at the ambiguity in the term, and finds one reason for this ambiguity to be due to it being 'dialectic in nature', being both concrete and abstract. Following from this, as part of its abstract nature,

'the home is a symbol, so that even though we recognize it, and "know it", it will always defy a

rational deconstruction and complete explication of its meaning content' (Benjamin 1995:3).

The implication is that the term has become taken for granted and this makes it difficult, if not impossible, to analyze. Rapoport believes, furthermore, that:

'the current use of *home* in research does not go beyond the popular usage, and hence beyond whatever folk theory exists; it has not even been realized that the term is not only vague and fuzzy (and "warm" in feeling) but that there is an implicit folk theory behind it that needs to be made explicit and examined' (Rapoport op cit:29).

But if Rapoport believes the term should therefore be dropped, Benjamin, in contrast thinks 'we should be willing to continue to confront the concept at face value' (Benjamin op cit:13). It is certainly appropriate, and necessary, for the social sciences to 'confront' such a concept precisely because its meaning has been taken for granted as unproblematic; this is what makes it worthy of investigation. If concepts are not challenged, they can become ossified, lagging behind and yet dragging their baggage of assumptions with them. And when Rapoport suggests that the unquestioned 'popular' use is underpinned by 'folk theory', the inference to be drawn is that historical, cultural and even ideological influences need to be acknowledged and if possible identified; in his words 'made explicit and examined'.

Finally, in his Foreword to the same book, architect David Saile extols the way in which the collection of articles 'embraces the connections and oppositions inherent in crossing disciplinary boundaries' (Saile in Benjamin, ed, op cit:x). A term such as *home* cannot be discussed fully if boundaries are not crossed. It will be argued in this dissertation that this is true not only in relation to disciplines, but in relation to the boundaries that have come to be created around the concept itself; specifically between home and work. And if Benjamin's definition of dialectic - 'a relationship of complementary phenomena that are dependent on one another's existence' (Benjamin op cit:2) - is accepted, then it can also be argued that 'home' is in a dialectical relationship with 'work' - an assertion that underpins the rationale of this dissertation. To understand the meaning of one, therefore, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the other. But whereas the assumptions underlying the concept of *work* - together with the 'popular' usage - have more recently been treated as problematic, those underlying *home* have not been challenged to the same extent.

In 1988, for example, Ray Pahl wrote of the concept of *work*:

'If most people who equate work with employment are trapped in the concepts and ideology of a period now passed, how should the notion of work be appropriately conceptualized in order to illuminate current reality?' (Pahl 1988:15).

He went on to consider how domestic work and 'other forms of unpaid or informal work' should be incorporated into a 'common



analytical schema' (ibid:15). Later he gives the example of a woman ironing a shirt in her own home, and the way in which perceptions of whether she was 'at work' or not depended on 'the social relations in which her task is embedded' (ibid:744).

This was one of the issues that emerged in earlier research undertaken into middle class women providing Bed and Breakfast in the rural South East (Randall 1984). The women were apparently doing what would normally be thought of as domestic work, but with the purpose of being paid for it. What was particularly interesting, however, was the way in which they played down the commercial side of this activity in order to maintain the 'respectability' associated with the home. Moreover, because they were working in their own homes their work did not seem to be taken seriously, as work, and in the same way the overheads were not always acknowledged even by the women themselves. On the other hand, they were on their own territory, in their own house, which not only represented a capital asset that could generate an income, but afforded a degree of autonomy. It was this research, together with work in a school of architecture, that stimulated the initial interest in home as a place of work. It was reinforced by the observation, from teaching on various courses - psychology, management, sociology of work, career development - that the separation of 'home' from 'work' was usually implicit. But perhaps the greatest influence was the experience of working from home, as an Open University tutor, and as someone running a small holiday accommodation business. This could not be described as domestic work, but

there was still the sense that one was in the wrong place to be working seriously, because at home.

With these considerations in mind, there were two conditions to be met when deciding upon a target group for the research. First, those targeted should be doing work that could not be considered domestic or in any way normally associated with 'home' and/or specifically with women. Second, they should equally not be employees of a parent organisation, in which case they would still have been part of that parent organisation outside the home. The group chosen was therefore one of self-employed and independent people, both men and women, who were using their home as their place of work. They were a self-selected group, being members of Ownbase, an organisation specifically for those 'working from home'. Given that they met the above conditions, they crossed the boundaries associated with 'home' and 'work' in such a way that the assumptions underlying these concepts could not be taken for granted, so could be challenged.

Against this background, the main issues to be confronted were essentially theoretical; to do with dualisms, concepts and assumptions. An analysis on the level of socially constructed meanings - cultural, historical and ideological - was implied.

After a review of the existing literature on home as a place of work (chapter 1) - which revealed issues to be addressed while at the same time leaving the separation of home and work to some extent unchallenged - there follow two chapters (2 and 3) on the

social historical and ideological background to what have come to be the legitimate models of home and work. These are seen as a product of a restricted and simplified model of the Industrial Revolution combined with 'modern' attitudes to time and space and a general emphasis on rationality. At an ideological level, the underlying emphasis on rationality can be traced back to the legacy of the Enlightenment.

With the focus to be on meanings that were constructed over time, it was necessary to find an exploratory approach that would reveal how words were used and interpreted by the critical group. Where concepts such as *home* and *work* are 'already constituted as meaningful' (Giddens 1984:284) in a way that is relatively unquestioned, a methodology of interpretation, combining hermeneutics with a critical edge, was necessary - and is described in chapter 4. There was a continuous and ongoing interaction between data gathering, review of literature and attention to theoretical issues. This 'back and forth' cannot be reflected in the structure and content of the chapters, but is also explained in chapter 4 in the context of the discussion of grounded theory - that is, the generation of concepts from data.

Analysis of the pilot interviews (chapter 5) suggested central themes to be taken up in the main interviews as well as confirming the appropriate theoretical sample to be sought. The data from the main interviews with *Ownbase* members indicated contradictions arising from the association with 'home'. It also

suggested that further contrasting dualisms that were found to characterise their situation - autonomy/legitimacy, work situation/market situation - rested upon the underlying dualism, house/home. The data also indicated the way in which those interviewed were coping with these contradictions (chapters 6 and 7). A postal survey, constructed to check this analysis against a larger group, provided verification, and some clarification, on the basis of consistency between the two sets of data (chapter 8). The results were interpreted as a consequence of the Modern paradigm and the Enlightenment legacy, which generated the separation of 'home' from 'work', and has continued to reinforce it. But if the Modern paradigm was seen as having associated the home with all that is non-rational, the conservatism of the post-modern paradigm was found to have the same effect. The contrast with 'work', as rational, is perpetuated.

The concept 'home', is therefore shown to be a powerful abstract - even ideological - concept; one that has been largely ignored. As such, it can be viewed as having been 'disembedded', specifically from house. In its abstract form, 'home' carries with it associations and expectations, with political and economic implications, that make it central to the contradictory position in which the Ownbase group find themselves. They are the 'deviant case', the 'peg', on which the theoretical argument is hung. Their distinctiveness as a group - as an appropriate theoretical sample - is the subject of chapter 1.

**CHAPTER 1**

**HOME AS A PLACE OF WORK:  
HOMEWORKERS, TELEWORKERS AND THE FUTURE OF WORK**

The literature available on home as a place of work at the time the research began could be placed under two headings: *homeworking* and the *future of work*. Increasingly, however, a third burgeoned into prominence: *teleworking*. There was a pattern to the way in which the three types of research and literature developed, which confirmed the need to look beneath the prevailing assumptions.

Despite some confusions over definitions, and some rather utopian suggestions, the three areas taken together confirmed: (a) important theoretical issues to be addressed at the level of assumptions - particularly concerning 'home' - that had been treated as unproblematic; and (b) a self-employed group that stood out as the appropriate focus for such an analysis, despite being obscured by the terms 'homeworker' and 'teleworker'.

**'Homeworking'**

Although 'homeworkers' (traditionally associated with poorly paid contracted-out piece work) are not new, and had never gone away, they were apparently 'rediscovered' in the seventies. In 1981 Cragg and Dawson's exploratory 'Qualitative research among Homeworkers' was published. Funded by the Department of Employment, it indicated official interest in the subject. Its purpose was to 'prepare the ground' for a national survey of homeworking, and was based on 50 in-depth interviews. The sample

specifically excluded:

'self-employed professionals, free-lancers and tradespeople; and those who, by the nature of their work, necessarily combine business with living premises - for example, publicans, farmers or shopkeepers' (ibid:1).

Despite these exclusions, the picture that emerged was one of considerable variation in the employment situation of the residual 'homeworkers' - taken to be those who 'worked at home, or some other place, not under the management of the person with whom they contract' (ibid: preface - definition based on the Wages Council Act of 1979). This definition, including as it did those working in 'some other place', was an early example of the lack of clarity that has contributed to a confusing picture of what constitutes 'homework'.

The work represented in Cragg and Dawson's sample included: manufacturing, machining, clerical, and 'other semi-professional'. So although those interviewed (a) were overwhelmingly female and (b) exhibited many features associated with traditional homeworking - such as having to learn the work at one's own expense, being content with what one could get and what would fit in with domestic commitments, not regarding it as a real job, and poor bargaining position - they nevertheless could **not** all be classified as traditional homeworkers. The 'semi-professional people', for example, included 'one lady (sic)' who was the advertising manager for a specialist magazine, and a publisher's editor specializing in music (ibid:11). So the

sample seemed to be neither one thing nor the other; it could not be regarded as representing either (traditional) homeworkers or all those who worked from a home base.

The women homeworkers in Catherine Hakim's 1982 study of the conditions in the clothing industry (again for the Department of Employment) were, on the other hand, typical of traditional homeworkers. But if, as Helena Pugh believed, the numbers of these homeworkers was greatly underestimated, it was also true that 'any' estimate of homeworking will be highly dependent on the definition used' (Pugh 1984:29). This was an important observation in view of the shakiness of later definitions, of both homeworkers and teleworkers.

Pugh found that when all home-based work was counted - as in the later Hakim report - it appeared that more men than women were involved. Pugh's work addressed this confusion. Using OPCS Longitudinal Study data, she excluded from the count of homeworkers:

- new technology homeworkers;

- work done from home as a base (mainly artisans);

- businesses run from the same place as home (mainly shops);

- professional, housekeeping, literary and artistic work.

She found that this gradually reversed the proportion of men to women homeworking as she tried to 'refine the definition' of what she meant by homeworking (ibid:19). The resulting group of homeworkers were predominantly women, in clerical, clothing and leather occupations - they were traditional homeworkers.

Pugh considered whether, in view of the growth in new technology working, it should in future be included in the figures, but she believed that in general pay was higher. More significantly, the numbers were small, whereas the extent of traditional homeworking was likely to be far greater than either she or official research could assess; the practical problems of gaining access to some homeworkers were probably insurmountable (ibid:30). She believed that estimates were likely to be inaccurate 'because of the understandable reluctance of homeworkers to admit to their work' (ibid:8). For example, they might fear losing their jobs or their State benefits; there might be no other work available, they might believe - possibly incorrectly - that they were working illegally or without the council's permission.

Reflecting closely Pugh's definition - and the essential link between women, low paid work and home - Sheila Allen took homework to be 'waged work carried out largely, but not exclusively, by women in their domestic premises' (Allen 1983:650). She began her article with a quote from Sally Alexander's study of *Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London*:

'To uncover the real situation of the working woman herself in the Victorian period, then we have to pick our way through a labyrinth of middle class moralism and mystification and resolve questions not only that contemporaries did not answer, but in many cases did not even ask' (Alexander 1976:63).

Allen's emphasis, that is, was on issues that were kept off the agenda, and taken for granted - on pervading myths and



ideological constructions. Important issues were raised, concerning the assumed separation of home from work, which produced a perception of home as a consumption unit and women as mothers and housewives, never workers (ibid:650). Like Pugh, she pointed to the likely underestimation of the extent of homework, 'the claim that homeworking is a peripheral economic activity', a contention which 'could not be substantiated' (ibid:653). The women involved constituted a labour force which was 'not casual in terms of hours or length of homework experience', but only in terms of 'casualized conditions' (ibid:654).

Allen argued that homeworking had been ignored because the sociology of the family and the household had been studied separately from the sociology of work. The uncritical conceptualization of 'work' as 'paid, regular, full-time, located outside the household' and 'home' as 'some sort of a haven', excluded from consideration both unpaid work involved in reproduction and any other paid work that did not fit this model (ibid:662).

Together with Carol Wolkowitz, Sheila Allen developed these ideas in a later book, *Homeworking: Myths and Realities* (1987). They emphasised the point that the 'dominant ideological constructions of work and production' - which are to be found on both a common-sense level and in the major theories of economics and sociology - have marginalised other forms of economic activity (ibid:11). In 1980 Gershuny and Pahl had made a similar point, that 'the main types of informal and officially unenumerated work is, of

course, that which goes on in and around the home' (ibid:1). And in 1985 Ruth Finnegan wrote:

'because of our assumptions associating work with formal, full-time paid employment - the "natural" pursuit of all able-bodied males in the community - other forms of working which may be of equal social and economic significance, simply get overlooked by both the academics and even (amazingly) the participants' (Finnegan 1985:151).

Allen and Wolkowitz conceded that feminists have tended to focus on unpaid domestic work when discussing home (op cit:2). The myth of the male breadwinner had been retained despite the crucial, though marginalised and unregulated, contribution of homeworkers (ibid:4-5). They moved the analysis on to a more ideological level that questioned underlying assumptions.

On the potential role of new technology, Allen and Wolkowitz argued that power relations were such that 'the ideological and material subordination of women homeworkers will continue to be a major issue for both "traditional" and "new" homeworkers' (ibid:57). They cited the work of Wix (1984:116) as having pointed out that:

'new technology has always been a part of homeworking production. The sewing machine and the type-writer, the knitting machine and the griswold (invented 1850) for knitting socks were once new technologies' (ibid: 55).

This is a particularly important point in view of the later

literature on 'teleworkers'. 'New technology' has come to be identified with telecommunications, and relatively high status fields such as information technology, ignoring its role in varying forms throughout history. Moreover, when applied to women's work, whether in the home or not, it has not tended to improve the status of the work. The example of the typewriter, above, is a case in point; clerical work dropped in status once it involved women at a keyboard (Martindale 1938).

One of the points made by Pennington and Westover (1989) was that although homework was not accorded high status in itself, it did allow families to improve their living standards beyond what they would otherwise be, while at the same time affording a degree of respectability. Davidoff had found the same to be true of letting out rooms, which gave the woman a little financial independence (Davidoff 1979:69). A married woman could still be 'in the home'; homework did not conflict with the 'traditional social sphere of activity', and had always been thought of as 'women's work' (Pennington and Westover op cit:169). It was this same Victorian concern for respectability - one that excluded the idea of women 'working' - that Pennington and Westover found to constrain middle class women who felt the need to contribute to the household income. Women's place, 'in the home', meant that there were few possibilities open to them other than for example embroidery or sewing, which could be done discretely. Such strategies, that maintained a 'facade', were followed by the 'respectable' working classes also. But this combination of domesticity and respectability produced what Pennington and

Westover called 'institutionalised dependency' (ibid:13).

Of more recent trends, they suggested that new homeworkers may differ in terms of class, education and skill from traditional homeworkers, but they believed that 'the majority of both groups share the same reason for working at home - the need to combine paid employment with childcare responsibilities' (ibid:160). This may be almost a defining characteristic of traditional homeworkers, maintaining the link between women, home and young children: the stereotype that came to prevail. It may well have applied to the original teleworkers (those who worked for F-International, for example). Like Allen and Wolkowitz, Pennington and Westover emphasised that the exploitation of homeworkers has continued, affecting large numbers of women in particular (ibid:162-3).

A concern for exploitation can be seen in the literature of the National Group on Homeworking (NGH) which is committed to, 'ensuring that the contribution homeworkers make to our economy is recognised and that homeworkers have the same employment rights as work place based workers'.

The same NGH leaflet, *The A-Z of Homeworking*, provides an extensive list of predominantly manufacturing and assembling jobs that are involved, with the observation that 'many people do not realise how many things are assembled, packaged or processed by women doing paid work at home'. This is (traditional) homework, as identified by Pugh, and little has changed; it has persisted

in this form (Boris & Daniels 1989).

But in 1987 Catherine Hakim's survey report, 'Homebased work in Britain', was published. It was a follow-up to Cragg and Dawson's earlier research (again funded by the Department of Employment), and displayed similar ambiguity concerning the definition of 'homeworker'. In it Hakim claimed to have overturned the stereotypical images of homework and homeworkers. The sample was to represent the homebased workforce as a whole, 'a group on which there is virtually no national data', and the only groups excluded were construction and road haulage, and family workers (ibid:7). The 1981 Labour Force Survey was used as the sampling frame and sift survey for a specially-designed interview survey of home-based workers (ibid:6). The main focus of the survey was on 'people working at home, in particular those working for one particular employer or organisation', and a further distinction was made between those working 'at home' (identified as 'homeworkers') and those working 'from home as a base', with almost two thirds being in this latter group (ibid:9). The majority of those defined as working 'at' home were women, and the majority of those defined as working 'from' home were men. Similarly, a distinction was made between manufacturing homework and other white-collar or service jobs.

On the spread of new technology to the home Hakim, like others, believed it to be 'a factor of less significance than is assumed' (ibid:249). Available evidence, she concluded, suggested that there were about 5,000 home-based workers doing 'computer

programming, systems analysis and related work, not all of whom would be using a computer terminal or personal computer at home'. She further concluded that 'teleworking' (by which she appeared to mean employed workers) 'does not substantively improve the working conditions of home-based workers' (ibid:249).

But there were some unexpected, sometimes questionable, but at the same time interesting findings. In the first place, 'home-based workers generally, and homeworkers in particular' were found to be 'distinctive in being well-educated by national standards, and far better qualified than the labour force as a whole' (ibid:240). For example, one in four home-based workers (and one third of the 'homeworkers') were found to have a degree or other higher educational qualification compared with one in seven in the population as a whole. This impressive, but somewhat baffling, conclusion appeared to indicate that a high proportion of the traditional women homeworkers (one third) - that is, those classified as working 'at' home - had a degree or similar.

Secondly, Hakim found 'homework jobs' to be: 'very diverse, being spread across all ten industry groups and most of the fifteen main occupation groups, and the same is even more true of jobs done from home as a base' (ibid:240).

Manufacturing jobs were in the minority, 'even among homeworkers'. But white-collar homework jobs revealed in the survey were both more numerous and more diverse; they included

'jobs in management and administration, professional jobs, design and artistic work, clerical and secretarial jobs and small numbers of jobs in selling, hairdressing and catering' (ibid:240). People working from home as a base exhibited even greater variety.

These conclusions, and the contention that they 'overturned the stereotypical images of homework and homeworkers', could be interpreted as a function of the rather unsatisfactory distinction made between those working 'at' home and those working 'from' home, the rather loose definition of 'homework', and the sample itself. What the results did indicate, however, was that some professional and self-employed people, and certainly many artists and writers, use their home as a place of work - but they are not normally referred to as homeworkers. They are, on the other hand, likely to be both well qualified and well paid - which would also explain the fact that those who were categorised by Hakim as 'homeworkers' were amongst the highest earners.

Hakim put the survey conclusions in the wider context of both the expanding peripheral sector of the labour market and an increase in the number of self-employed, predominantly single-person businesses (ibid:247). It was the self-employed and professionals who were increasing in number, who had presumably produced the unexpected results in the profile of 'homeworkers'. In 1989, in her report on 'New Recruits to Self-employment in the 1980s', Hakim concluded that 75% of the self-employed operated

from home (Hakim 1989:288).

In summary, therefore, where the definition of 'homeworker' had been more concise, and limited to traditional homeworkers, the continuing and extensive use of women as low paid outworkers was acknowledged; this literature also addressed the ideological level of assumptions concerning home and work. Where the definition of homeworker had been loosened to include other groups, especially the self-employed, the results were confusing. But while the importance of technology and the extent of 'new homeworking' was thought to be limited, the more substantial numbers of self-employed and professionals who worked from home were revealed. This group was more specifically a focus of interest in the future of work literature.

#### **Future of work literature**

Though relatively neglected as a specifically home-based group, the independent and 'professional' sector of the workforce has nevertheless been a focal interest in 'future of work' literature and predictions; perhaps partly because some of the authors - for example, Charles Handy, James Robertson and Richmond Postgate - themselves represented professionals who worked from home. So, whereas Allen and Wolkowitz criticised the utopian visions offered by observers such as these (op cit:163), R. E. Pahl accused them of being 'embarrassingly ethnocentric' and anecdotal; he also found a tendency to be 'obsessed with the imputed consequences of new technology' (Pahl 1988:744). But the literature was influential and widely quoted, carrying at times



a missionary zeal. It drew attention to the way in which work was likely to continue to move out of large organizations, some of it into homes; and to the fact that the self-employed and professionals were likely to be an important group in this trend.

In 1984 Richmond Postgate's study *'Home - a place for work?* was published by the Gulbenkian Foundation; together with Toffler's *The Third Wave* (1980) it was a forerunner of later 'future of work' literature. While he discussed the more positive future possibilities for work in the home, Postgate warned that people might be unwillingly 'sent home'. And of the developments in technology, he noted that 'technology can detach function from its conventional physical anchorage' (ibid:81); but countered technological determinism with the comment that: 'It (technology) is not a blind force of nature' (ibid:81).

In 1985 James Robertson's *Future work: jobs, self-employment and leisure after the industrial age* and Charles Handy's *The Future of Work* were published, and widely reviewed. Robertson's exhibited a degree of utopianism - advocating a move towards 'sane, humane and ecological' (SHE) future work - mixed with a faith in technology:

'whereas the technology of the industrial age drove work out of the home and the neighbourhood, and deprived most people of the freedom to control their work, technology of the post-industrial will make it possible to reverse this trend' (ibid:41).

He noted that there was already a 'growing trend for professional

employees and salespeople to work from their own homes instead of the company office', relying on the telephone and the computer to keep in touch (ibid:156) - but he did not call these people 'teleworkers'.

Charles Handy also argued for new forms of work for the future - more part-time, voluntary and co-operative work, shorter careers, and more respect for work in the home and community. Although he referred to discarding 'the shibboleth of employment' and the assumptions that 'imprison' us (Handy 1985:188), his was a less utopian vision. He believed organizations would shrink as they cut overheads by encouraging employees to use 'terminals rather than trains'; and that the next, 'more radical' step would be to get the employees to work from their homes - or their cars (ibid:73). The trend would be towards payment by fees, and 'more fees mean, essentially, more self-employed' (ibid:77); Handy believed the self-employed sector was growing rapidly anyway. In the large organization of the future he predicted that 'everyone will be a professional', and the organizations would have to adapt to their emphasis on consent rather than command (ibid:87-88). Values, that is, would not be those traditionally associated with an organization.

In *The Age of Reason* (1989) Handy again questioned much that was taken for granted, and now firmly predicted that work would increasingly move out of organizations (ibid:190). Organizations would no longer be seen as useful in the way that they had been for the past 100 years, either to employers or governments

(ibid:189-190). As a place of work they would employ a diminishing proportion of the workforce. The same obsolescence was seen as true of offices, which were beginning to be seen as an unnecessary cost, 'an expensive way of accommodating the work' (ibid:87). Offices were a creation of the nineteenth century, an integral part of capitalist development, ensuring efficiency (with an emphasis, for example, on good light) and surveillance (ibid: 32-33).

Handy predicted the likely scenario for the future to be a workforce divided into: a core of experts and professionals, who will be 'bound' to the organization; a contractual fringe of independents; and a flexible labour force (Handy 1989:72-74). Of these three groups, only the first would work directly for the organization - the other two could work from home.

It was the professionals and experts who, it was predicted, would be in short supply. Individual talent was seen as being increasingly important (ibid:204); and 'work' (the activity) could be carried out anywhere. A recurring theme in Handy's work was the importance of the words we use, and the meaning they carry; of the recent interest in 'telecommuting', he commented:

'homeworkers are out, telecommuters are in. It's all in the language but it is the language which signals the change, the change from *freak* to *fashion*' (ibid:86 emphasis added).

If a 'homeworker' had been cast as a 'freak', a 'teleworker' (which Handy saw as predominantly employees) had come to be

presented as 'fashion'. The comment is reminiscent of Anna Pollert's observation in 1991 that 'flexibility' and flexible specialization had become a 'fetish' (Pollert 1991:xvii). It makes two important points: first, the significance of the meanings attached to words and the way these can be manipulated; and second, the increasing, and determined, attention given to the term *teleworker*.

### **'Teleworking'**

A review of some of recent literature and research on 'teleworking' is necessary because of all the attention that this term has received since the mid eighties; ultimately, it came to be used to describe any white-collar work carried out from home. The self-employed independents and the professionals were increasingly drawn into the ever looser definitions, apparently in response to the relatively few who could correctly be called teleworkers, together with the desire for a higher profile. The tendency towards technological determinism was evident, compounded by an implicit, and sometimes explicit, desire to distinguish 'teleworking' from 'homeworking'. Much of the literature seemed to be aimed at employers, and the interest of the telecommunications business was clear.

In 1984 Ursula Huws identified *The New Homeworkers* (Huws 1984a), based on a survey of 78 homeworkers whose work involved new technology, mainly computer professionals but also general office workers (she defined teleworking as remote working using computers, modems, etc.). The majority were women in their

thirties with young children. Average pay levels were significantly lower than for on-site workers, but in a *New Society* article (Huws 1984b) Huws claimed they were, 'far removed in socio-economic terms from the traditional homeworkers' (ibid:454). On the other hand, they seemed to have much in common with traditional homeworkers, in addition to being lower paid employees: their problems were identified as insecurity and isolation, and the 'advantage' of their situation that they could combine work with childcare.

Some extravagant claims were being made for teleworking; for example, that 60% of white collar workers would eventually work from home. Huws refuted this, and its implicit technological determinism; there was little to suggest that the increased numbers in part-time working, self-employment and homeworking was the result of new technology (Huws:1984a:13). Early predictions were not met, except in the computer industry itself (for example ICL), and Huws pointed out that not all those working in the computer industry could be described as teleworkers 'in the sense that their work involved long-distance communication with a computer' (ibid:13). Her overall conclusion was that 'evidence of a shift to teleworking was scant' (ibid:13).

British Telecom, on the other hand, took a considerable and predictable interest in developments, seeing telecommunications at the centre of these. They commissioned two reports by the Henley Centre. In the first of these Kinsman stated, encouragingly for BT, that 'telecommuting' was 'poised to become

one of the most obvious benefits of modern communications' (Kinsman 188:2). Teleworking was defined as:

'working somewhere away from the office on either a full time or a part time basis, and communicating with it electronically rather than commuting to it physically' (ibid:2).

It could be done from home or from a local centre, and the teleworker could be employed or freelance self-employed, 'engaged not only in technical computer-related occupations but in a whole range of office jobs' (ibid:2). But if the definition was shifting, to take in more groups, including the self-employed, the emphasis was still on the advantages to employers: reduced costs, increasing productivity and improved performance. Advantages for the workers were also suggested, although it was noted that there might be a need to encourage men (particularly 'assertive' men) as most of the successful examples of telecommuting had involved women (e.g. F-International). Although Kinsman believed teleworking to be 'an idea whose time has come' (ibid:16), he linked the likely reluctance to being 'away from the action' (ibid:14) - away from the central office.

In the second report carried out by the Henley Centre for BT, *Tomorrow's Workplace: Cost/Benefit analysis* (1988), costs and benefits to the employer were again addressed. 'New homeworkers' were specifically distinguished from traditional homeworkers as, on average, 'higher skilled and higher paid than traditional homeworkers' (ibid:3). But when the authors looked at attitudes to work. They came to some interesting conclusions. Quoting

from the Henley Centre PSC (Planning for Social Change) Survey, which drew on a 'representative sample' of 2,000 adults, the most important needs to satisfy were found to be having control over what is done and making decisions on the basis of knowledge; 50% put these as the most important, compared with 35% who cited earnings as first or second most important (ibid:9). Results indicated that for workers in Social Grades A and B, making friends at work was less important than it was for manual groups, whereas using their knowledge was more important. Furthermore, 70% of the AB group (compared with 48% of all respondents) said they would prefer to be able to organise their own worktime, and one fifth of them said they would exchange 5% of their pay for the ability to say how the work was organised (ibid:10). This kind of 'individualism', and desire for autonomy, was linked in the report to the growth in the number of self-employed (ibid:10); but the idea that this suggested a potential for 'teleworking' underpinned the report.

Others researching in the area again warned that projections in terms of 'teleworking' were often unrealistic and misconceived. In 1989 John and Celia Stanworth offered some 'Home truths about teleworking'. In the face of the Henley Centre prediction that the numbers teleworking might be over four million by the mid 1990s, the Stanworths cautioned that 'the rhetoric of teleworking appears to be far ahead of the reality' (ibid:48). They found such predictions to be a gross exaggeration, and assessment of problems grossly understated. Like Handy, they observed that teleworking was 'only the latest in a long line of managerial

fashions, sold to the many but, in reality, worn by the few'; it remained a 'rare and relatively novel work arrangement' (ibid:48).

Of the two million people estimated to be working at or from home, the Stanworths believed that 'only a tiny fraction' were 'teleworkers'. The main groups working from home were: corporate itinerants such as sales representatives; freelancers such as authors, artists, and some professionals; traditional homeworkers, usually female, in the manufacturing industry; and self-employed itinerants, for example artisans; and, finally, personal service/own account workers. Like Huws, they concluded that the experiments in teleworking (e.g. Rank Xerox, ICL) had indicated problems of uncertainty and isolation. And like Kinsman, they identified fears of being home-based arising from the exclusion from the organization, as well as the 'association with low-paid unskilled occupations and, at best, "quasi-employment" status' - by implication, that is, with traditional (women's) homework.

In a later paper (1990), Celia Stanworth moved further away from the original definition of telework, according to which there would only be a few thousand teleworking. What she called a 'looser definition' was resulting from 'a consensus amongst academics'; an interesting comment on the construction of meaning. The revised definition included a 'wider variety of "flexiplace" arrangements' including 'combinations of office work, work in satellite offices, work at customers' premises or



at home'. Using this looser definition, which focused on communicating work remotely, the numbers increased significantly but unquantifiably. According to this definition, it could be assumed that a 'good proportion' were self-employed (ibid:3). But, significantly, she found that information technology was an 'enabling' factor rather than a determinant.

In the same year Huws, Korte and Robinson's *Telework: towards the elusive office* (1990), was published, based largely on the Empirica data of 1987. They made the following observation:

'It is difficult to recall any other technological development affecting work organisation which has aroused so much moral passion since the introduction of the power loom' (ibid:1).

A comprehensive survey of relevant literature reinforced earlier conclusions: that, although telework accounted for 'only a tiny fraction' of all employment, the literature on it covered 'an extraordinarily broad spectrum' (ibid:xiii). They traced the literature back to that which came out during the oil crisis, pointing to a trade-off between transportation and telecommunications; also to futuristic publications beginning with Toffler, and to more pessimistic publications that have emphasised the isolation and exploitation.

Of the many terms that have been applied to the supposedly new way of working, Huws et al found a definition of 'teleworking' to be surprisingly elusive. They considered the various options, and found them all wanting. They decided that the fact of

working from a homebase and using information technology was 'not a good enough basis from which to construct a definition of telework' (ibid:5 emphasis added).

But their continued pursuit of a satisfactory definition rested on the belief that 'the word telework has acquired a potent symbolic value' and 'the idea of the teleworker has become a representation of what the future of work might be' (ibid:8-9). Like others before them, Huws et al found that the word could not be avoided, and had become 'politically loaded' (ibid:9).

The definition they finally settled on had three elements: the location was 'independent of the location of the employer or contractor'; *electronic equipment* was relied on 'primarily or to a large extent'; and the results were '*communicated remotely*' (ibid:10). So, by this definition, as before, 'telework' was not necessarily carried out from home; but it was work that relied 'primarily or to a large extent' on the use of electronic equipment. On the other hand, they dismissed the notion that decisions would be determined by the technology, which they saw as a tool. Decisions would be determined by those 'with the power and resources to purchase and use (the technology) for their own particular ends' (ibid:219).

The extent to which the growth of teleworking had been influenced by the technology available was one of the original questions addressed by Haddon and Silverstone (1993). Their primary interest was in 'Telework and the changing relationship of home

and work', and they looked at the influence of teleworking on domestic life and other members of the family. Based on detailed interviews in 20 households, they found concern with maintenance of boundaries (between home and work) and, related to this, impression management: 'being able to convey to outsiders ... the image of being in a workplace' (ibid:7). They also found that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) 'played a significant role in helping to maintain these boundaries' and create the right image (ibid:13); answerphones were an example.

Haddon and Silverstone looked at the different degrees to which ICTs were necessary, according to the employment status of the person working from home. Their operational definition of teleworkers was 'people working at home using, as a minimum requirement, microcomputers and the telephone in the course of their work' (ibid:2). This 'minimum requirement' would seem to be at the very loose end of the revised definitions, especially as a computer (which might only be used as a word processor) and a telephone are a minimum requirement in the majority of work situations; but they specified that the work be carried out 'at home'. It meant that the sample included professional and self-employed people using their home as their place of work, as well as employees such as the original teleworkers. It was a rather *ad hoc* definition of 'teleworker'.

Significantly, Haddon and Silverstone found that whereas for those categorised as employees, work would generally have been 'impractical without ICTs', for a second group, who were mostly

self-employed, running businesses or consultancies, ICTs merely made telework 'more of a feasible option' (ibid:5). And for a third group, also predominantly self-employed, the work 'could have been conducted from home without ICTs' (ibid:4 emphasis added). Once again revealed were the self-employed and professionals - including a report writer, a researcher, an editor, an accountant, an administrator, a systems analyst and a small-business person - who were using their home as their place of work. For them ICTs were not necessary. The authors found that, 'this work could have taken place in the past without the aid of new ICTs' (ibid:4). For example, the editor and an abstract writer were found to have worked for nearly 20 years at home, until recently using only a typewriter and basic phone (ibid:4). The authors acknowledged that these examples represented,

'forms of professional and clerical work - not captured in literature on traditional manufacturing homework - which have always been conducted at home by a few' (ibid:4-5).

It is not at all clear, therefore, why these people should have been called teleworkers, if the use of ICTs would seem to be at most an 'enabler' (ibid:5).

In Anne Fothergill's later paper on 'Telework: the sociological implications for individuals and their families' (1994), these problems of definition were immediately apparent. Most obviously her (much larger) sample shared similar characteristics with Haddon and Silverstone's third group; they were predominantly

self-employed, well-educated and professional, including some very high earners (ibid:13).

Fothergill had approached organisations known to employ corporate teleworkers, but most of these turned down the request for interviews with employees 'because of the numbers of requests that organisations receive from external researchers'. It is likely that the relatively few organisations employing genuine teleworkers, according to the original definition of teleworking, have been particular targets; Fothergill's subsequent comment is telling:

'It has often been quoted that there are more people researching into teleworking than there are actually doing it' (ibid:7).

Having set out to research *teleworkers*, however, the term was given a 'broad' definition by Fothergill:

'participants must work predominantly at or from home using computers and/or some form of telecommunications and/or information technology, as a necessary part of, or to facilitate their paid work at or from home' (ibid:3).

This definition kept the technology in the forefront, but was so broad it would include someone working mainly from home, using a telephone. At the same time it safely encompassed all those in her predominantly self-employed sample. The distinguishing feature of the sample did not seem to be the use of technology at all, but the actual place of work or base from which the work was carried out, the home. If it is not seen in this way - that

is, the home as one possible place of work - underlying assumptions can distort conclusions.

First, for example, technology is commonplace in work situations of any kind, so why should it not be found in a home if the home is the place of work? Second, where the home is the place of work conclusions may be drawn that associate this with problems, or 'disadvantages', that may apply equally to any other place of work. For example, Fothergill cites Hakim's report as indicating that 'many home-based workers are over-qualified for the jobs they do or under-employed in relation to their qualifications', when this may be no more true of this group than the general workforce. Similarly, the 'disadvantages' mentioned by Fothergill's interviewees included: the need to be self disciplined/organised; lack of work space; a tendency to overwork; being confined in the same place all the time; lack of equipment; lack of support/stimulation from others; having to combine domestic/child care tasks and work; lack of career opportunities; and low pay. Again, these could apply to any employed or self-employed group. Even apparently less general responses - for example, clients expecting you to be available 24 hours a day, and lack of clear boundaries between work time, leisure and family time - might be familiar to any self-employed person, which Fothergill acknowledged. The association made between these disadvantages and using the home as the place of work could therefore be largely spurious, and do not as Fothergill suggested 'clearly relate to the problems of working in the home environment'. Only the stated disadvantage, 'others

not realising you are working, because at home' seems to be specifically to do with using the home as a place of work, and the way the home is seen by others.

In general, however, Fothergill found that, for this predominantly self-employed - and largely professional - group the stated advantages of working from home outweighed the disadvantages; she found a high level of job satisfaction. The kind of advantages mentioned fell into three categories that related to: contact with the family, flexibility in the use of time, and being self-employed or their 'own boss'. Fothergill acknowledged the suitability of her self-employed and professional group to working from home, but made the point in terms of 'teleworking' having the most appeal to the group; a conclusion that perpetuates a very distorted use of this term, at the same time masking the importance of the self-employed and professional group as such.

## **Conclusion**

*Homeworking* has traditionally, and more concisely, referred to women doing low-paid and 'low-tech' work; the association is with tradition, domesticity, children and the home. *Teleworking*, in contrast, has been presented as associated with 'high-tech' mental work demanded by the modern world of business, and entirely appropriate for men; comparable, that is, with working in an organization away from home. The aim has apparently been to counteract the homeworker image, and the association with 'home'. In this way 'home' and 'work' continued to be played off

against one another, reinforcing the ideological space between them. On the other hand, 'homeworkers' and 'teleworkers' both refer strictly (and most usefully) to employees; moreover, to those sections of the workforce that have come to be associated with working regular hours in factories and offices, respectively, so increasing the sense of novelty.

The available evidence indicated that independent professionals and the self-employed needed to be extracted from extremely loose definitions of 'homeworker' and 'teleworker'. If they are not looked at independently of these terms conclusions reached are likely to be at best confusing, at worst invalid. A review of the 'homeworker' and 'teleworker' research, together with the 'future of work' literature, suggested that the self-employed and professionals are a distinctive group; they have not only contributed fairly consistently to the numbers working from home, but are apparently well suited to this way of working. They are exemplified in the membership of *Ownbase* (originally *Homebase*), an organisation whose members are overwhelmingly self-employed and independent.

*Ownbase* was founded by Chris Oliver in 1986. She funded the first newsletter herself, and in an interview for *Woman's Hour* (BBC Radio 4, 16.3.90) explained that her intention was that the newsletter should be used for the exchange of ideas. As a writer working from home, she believed that others, like her, might appreciate this kind of contact. She spoke of the isolation that could be experienced by those working independently, on their



own; their situation was very different from that of employees who were part of an organisation. This original initiative developed into a quarterly newsletter of material supplied mainly by the members. It aimed to provide both advice and support for those 'working from home', and covered areas of common interest - for example, insurance, business rates, marketing, and other problems that can arise. Personal profiles and letters were included, and there was a published contact list as well as regional contact groups which met informally. A sense of a shared identity was encouraged and a substitute for colleagues provided.

As *Ownbase* was non-profit making, funding eventually had to be sought, and this was provided by the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1988, with the organisation run by a supervisory board of *Ownbase* members.

As one of the earliest members of *Homebase*, having effectively worked from home for some time, I was in contact with Chris Oliver who approved and facilitated access to the members. The membership at the end of the eighties was in the region of 300, although it is now less, at something over 200; members pay an annual subscription of about £20 to belong. In the 1994 Directory, which listed all members for the first time, the main occupational categories were: accountancy, business consultancy and tax; book-keeping; computers (consultancy, sales, programming, etc.); desk-top publishing; independent financial advisers; indexers; marketing, research, secretarial, training,

word-processing. But many other businesses and occupations were represented; for example musicians, publishers and artists. (It is noticeable that the only reference to teleworking in the list is against academic researchers who have joined for the purpose of carrying out research under this heading; homeworking is, not surprisingly, not mentioned.) The full list confirmed that the members are, as they have always been, predominantly self-employed and independent, using their home as their place of work.

The Ownbase members constitute a small but valuable resource. They are a distinctive group, having combined work and home in a way that represents continuity as much it does novelty, despite the emphasis on the latter. Furthermore, they have crossed the boundary between 'home' and 'work' more clearly than have 'homeworkers' and 'teleworkers'. The distinction that has been promoted between these two terms has perpetuated the assumed separation between 'home' and 'work'. The following two chapters begin to address this separation at a social historical and ideological level.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SOCIAL HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF 'HOME' AND 'WORK'

If the terms 'home' and 'work' are to be understood as socially constructed concepts, it is first necessary to address the cultural and historical contexts in which the contemporary meanings developed. In Giddens' terms, this implies 'the use of knowledge about the past as a means of breaking with it' (Giddens 1990:50), which he refers to as *historicity*. Without this, it will be argued, simplistic accounts and even 'myths' are left unquestioned. The tendency towards technological determinism, together with the perpetuation of the home/work dichotomy, noted in the last chapter, have operated against this process; complexity and continuity have been submerged, resulting in social constructions of 'work' and 'home' based on very limited models.

This argument is contained within the three sections of this chapter, which address: the distorted and selective image of the Industrial Revolution; the way in which work came to be bounded within time; and *home* to be bounded within segregated space. The legitimate model of 'work' became dissociated from nature but associated with ideas of science and progress; whereas the legitimate model of 'home' continued to be associated with all that was natural, and with restraint and conservatism - as an antidote to work.

## **The Industrial Revolution: a distorted and selective image?**

Any discussion of the separation of *home* from *work* needs to consider the influence of what we know as the Industrial Revolution - the image and the reality.

Before the Industrial Revolution we have a picture of the household as a unit of production in an 'industrious home' (Quiney 1986); a picture that contributes to a simplistic before/after picture of what happened.

On the impact and timing of the Industrial Revolution there is considerable debate. The impression that a total transformation from domestic industry to factory work occurred in a relatively short space of time (the 'big bang' theory) has permeated much of our understanding; and nineteenth century social theory reflected the received wisdom of the day. This was despite evidence to the contrary (see Joyce 1987:25).

If, first, one considers the impact and timing of the Industrial Revolution, for example, it is clear that (a) the separation between home and work existed to some extent before this time, while it was also true that (b) the domestic system persisted, and the factory system did not appear, until later than is often assumed.

Rosemary O'Day found evidence that 'the change from family to capitalized industry outside the home', which 'occurred most obviously in an urban context ... independently of the

introduction of the factory system', existed long before the nineteenth century (O'Day 1983). Skilled men began to work at the master's shop, and poorer women were drawn to work outside the home also. So, in rural areas also 'many types of occupation were already withdrawn from the household'. These trends were, according to O'Day, well under way in the seventeenth century, so that 'family industry had broken down in all classes in England in the urban context long before the nineteenth century industrialization' (O'Day 1983:38).

Conversely, there is evidence that the domestic system persisted well beyond the years of the 'Industrial Revolution', sometimes taken to be 1760 to 1860, although Eric Hobsbawm placed it within the narrower timespan, 1789 to 1848. Kumar (1978) quotes Maurice Dobb:

'The survival into the second half of the nineteenth century of the conditions of domestic industry and of the manufactory had an important consequence for industrial life and the industrial population which is too seldom appreciated. It meant that not until the last quarter of the century did the working class begin to assume the homogeneous character of the factory proletariat' (Dobb 1963:265).

The advantages of maintaining the domestic system had been noted early in the century. In 1806 a Commons Select Committee of the Woollen Industry pointed to the advantages of a system in which the Clothier was 'at liberty to work himself, and employ his own family and others, in any way which his interest or convenience

may suggest.' Whatever the degree of 'liberty' enjoyed by the Clothier, the advantages of the flexibility provided by the domestic system was not lost on the committee. It was suggested that it could continue to exist alongside the factory system; that they could be 'mutual aids to each other' (Clayre 1977:63-67). It was not, therefore, the case that all those in the industry followed the new machinery into the factories; the woman at home could, for example, continue to use the 'cottage' jenny to spin the wool (Perkin 1969:155).

But for many there was little choice:

'In other textiles (than wool) and in hosiery, in nail and chain making, boots and shoes, tailoring and dressmaking and many other trades, domestic outworkers struggled on much longer, to become in many cases the wretchedly poor and exploited "sweated trades" of the 1890's and 1900's. Their long agony of poverty, starvation and degradation was part of the social cost of industrialism which must be offset against its benefits' (Perkin *ibid*:146).

The handloom weavers and frame knitters, who had prospered in the earlier years of industrialization, were forced out by competition; their 'long decline into misery' began as early as 1798 (Perkin *ibid*:145).

While some saw the factory system as a 'blessing' (Ure 1835, in Clayre *ibid*:67), others already saw a 'curse' in the repetition demanded of the workers (Fielden 1836, in Clayre *ibid*:72).

The development of factory complexes deep in the countryside further complicated the picture, representing as they did the continuing influence of a rural existence. Styal and Saddleworth were just two examples. These developments, being part of the de-centralization trend (Pahl 1970:21) carried with them a 'self-sufficient "village" character' (Kumar 1978:137). More obviously, there was a continuing identification with a rural life and a 'cottager' existence, not least because even in the middle of the nineteenth century the workforce was still predominantly in agriculture and domestic service, with old craft industries still employing large numbers. Therefore:

'Factory workers ... were a minority of the working class at the end of the Industrial Revolution, and even if we add to them the miners, transport workers, iron shipbuilders and other rapidly expanding occupations who can be presumed to have improved their real wages *pari passu* with them, they would still be outnumbered by those below them' (Perkin op cit:145).

Furthermore, a pattern of work organisation based on the artisan workshop persisted within the factories, the work being carried out by 'more or less autonomous teams of skilled and semi-skilled workers.' These would agree their rates with the management and even employ their own men, to suit themselves. Rationalisation and industrialism as we know it did not replace such systems until the application of 'scientific management' at the turn of the century (Kumar 1978:135).

Drawing on Neil Smelser's study of the Lancashire cotton

industry, Perkin concluded that far from being a straightforward affair, the segregation of activities 'was a long-drawn-out, syncopated process, proceeding in different ways and at different speeds' (Perkin *ibid*:155). The idea of a 'great divide' between home and work in early industrialization is not supported:

'A more complex and satisfying picture emerges which notes marked differentiation earlier, considerable continuity, but also elements of integration later on' (Joyce 1987:23).

Joyce condemns what he sees as 'propagandist accounts' that:

'tend to exaggerate the novelty of recent developments, such as homeworking. This is so in large measure because they deal with very crude "stage model" notions of industrialization' (Joyce 1987:5).

In his extensive analysis of 'industrial' and 'post-industrial' society, Kumar takes up points such as these, specifically focusing on the distorted image of industrialization - and industrialism - that was handed on in this way, not only in popular culture, but also by key social theorists.

Industrialism, according to Kumar, seemed irreversible. It was identified with urbanisation, bureaucratization, and the economic motive (Kumar *ibid*:81). The factory system reduced the home to a unit of consumption, the sense of community was lost, and the self-governing guilds and similarly traditional institutions were rejected as not sufficiently rational and efficient. A new division of labour, as outlined by Adam Smith, was an intrinsic



part of these changes, but did not reach its 'logical conclusion' until Taylorism took hold at the end of the nineteenth century (Kumar ibid:87). This development was seen as introducing further divisions that had not previously existed: knowledgeable management was separated from a knowledge-less workforce; conception was separated from execution; and mental work was separated from the manual work.

The underlying image of industrialism gained legitimacy and authority from its association with 'science and reason' in a secular and 'rational' society. But, like others, Kumar believed this model and its legacy to be a distortion of reality in terms of: the mode of social change; the timing and speed of change; and the directions of change.

First, the model was taken from the British experience; Britain being the 'favourite candidate for front-runner' where 'progress' was concerned, according to Wallerstein (Wallerstein 1991:53). Industrialization was therefore portrayed as a natural and evolutionary process. It carried with it the notion of inevitability.

Second, the timing and speed of the process was distorted in the ways already discussed. Continuities with the past were neglected, and variations in development 'beyond industrialism' unacknowledged. Kumar labels this part of the distortion 'historical abbreviation' (Kumar ibid:132). It was in this context, Kumar claimed, that the 'very brilliance of the

conceptualizations of the early sociologists, in their precocious grasping of the whole system of industrialism, dazzled the eyes of their successors' (Kumar ibid:144). Despite their considerable insight, they shared in the distortion.

The third way in which Kumar believed the model to be a distortion arose from the emphasis on evolutionary development - an assumption shared by nearly all the nineteenth century theorists which resulted in one form of convergence thesis. This arose from a general acceptance that, following the 'logic of industrialism', particular - compatible - institutional forms and values would result. Central amongst these were: the factory system; stratification and the division of labour; commercialization; and the ethic of achievement (Kumar ibid:149-153).

Kumar argued that these features resulted in assumptions that were both 'dogmatic and mischievous'. The evolutionist explanation suggested one driving force and this was taken to be industrial technology and industrial organization. Although he does not label it as such, it would seem to be the convergence thesis that Kumar takes issue with in this case. But this is compounded, he believed, by the historical abbreviation which ascribed all industrial developments to 'the same procrustean bed of technological determinism' (Kumar ibid:153). As with any critique of the convergence thesis and technological determinism, he points to the neglect of cultural and historical factors. For example, in the British context, the persistent power of the

aristocracy; and the 'disdain for and concealment of any commercial interest whatsoever' of the 'gentleman'. Their values, some of them 'pre-industrial' - for example 'qualities of culture, status and honour' - continued to permeate the industrialization process (Kumar ibid:155); they continued to be associated with the professions, for example, and were essentially conservative.

One of the reasons for this omission seems to have been the almost exclusive focus on what was happening in the Manchester cotton industry. It was this popular image that was repeated throughout society in books, songs, etc. (Kumar ibid:162); and Engels' observations of the conditions in Manchester had contributed significantly to Marx's theory. Centred around the idea of progress, the 'industrial revolution' was a 'contemporary organizing myth', according to Nef (Nef 1943, cited in Wallerstein, 1991:52); it became

'the basic tale about the modern world ... so deeply rooted, still today, in our popular and our scholarly language and perceptions of the world that it is not the subject of serious analysis' (Wallerstein 1991:52).

The focus on a narrow area of development as constituting 'the industrial revolution' produced a further anomaly, according to Kumar: 'some of the most characteristic features of industrialism' were designated 'the Second Industrial Revolution'. This ignored the fact that they were 'logical expressions of the currents of rationalization, specialization,

and centralization that were the central features of classic industrialism'. Together these found 'an institutional definition hitherto denied them by the persistence of older customary modes of organization and attitudes' (Kumar ibid:175). Amongst the developments at this time were the early stages of industrial organization:

'the systematic application of science to industrial production;... the rationalization of work organization and management ('scientific management'); ... the common use of large limited liability companies (instead of the family firm) for the raising of capital; concentration of production and ownership, and control of markets...: the separation of ownership and control in large firms and the rise of managerialism ...' (ibid:175).

For Kumar this transformation constituted 'the consummation of the Industrial Revolution'.

### **Time and Work**

It was Scientific Management - known colloquially as 'time and motion study' - that epitomised this transformation, being the rational and efficient use of time. This very specific attitude towards and representation of time was - and is - built into what we understand as a modern, industrialised society. It will again be argued here that accounts of both the transition and the resulting representation - being part of 'received wisdom' - tend towards an oversimplification that ignores complexity and variation.

Contemporary perceptions of time cannot be understood without some attention to the central role played by clocks in the 'making of the modern world', as emphasised by David Landes in his account of the 'revolution in time' (1983). His is an 'orthodox' account of the development of 'time-pieces' and measured time. It is both fascinating and relatively uncontentious, but does indicate the importance attached to perfecting precise quantification. He traces the original interest in correct timekeeping to the monasteries of the twelfth century (Landes 1983:70), but the demand arose amongst the bourgeoisie - the merchants and town-dwellers - of the Middle Ages. It was in the towns that the 'man-made day' began to take over from the 'natural' day of the country. It was in the towns that 'the system of time discipline and valuation was undoubtedly more rigorous' (Thrift 1988:78-79). Moreover, as Elias points out, the trend has been for the link between 'calendar-units' and changing seasons to be weakened in urbanized and industrialized areas (Elias 1987:41-42).

Landes rarely mentions the Industrial Revolution as such, but does compare the 'time-free' domestic workers with the 'time-bound' employers and their agents of the eighteenth century. As demand increased, the tension between the two increased. The reluctance of the cottage workers to 'devote themselves unremittingly to their tasks' was compounded, according to Landes, by their tendency towards dishonesty in their claim to 'perks' (ibid:229). The introduction of work bells to impose time discipline on the home workers was the focus of much further

resentment (ibid:73). The situation was 'resolved' by transferring workers from a putting-out system to factory production. This was not viable before industrialization and the accompanying technical innovations, the cottage industries having been until that time the most economical and profitable method. Working time was one of the first conditions to be regulated following the Industrial Revolution; in Britain legislation was introduced in 1802 (European Foundation, Legal and Contractual Limitations to Working-Time in the European Union Member States, 1994, quoted in Mulgan et al 1995:48).

From the 1770s:

'an increasing number of workers found themselves employed at jobs that required them to appear by a set time every morning and work a day whose duration and wage were a function of the clock' (Landes:229).

Landes acknowledges that the transition was not smooth; there was what he identifies as an 'inability and reluctance to show up on time'. He sums up the problem in this way:

'These were people who were accustomed to work at their own pace, to take their rest and distraction, or for that matter relieve themselves, as and when they pleased. They could work very hard when they had to - at end of week, in harvest time - but Sunday was holy, Monday was holy, and Tuesday was often needed to recover from so much holiness. Coming as they did from cottages and fields, they felt the factory to be

a kind of jail, with the clock as the lock'  
(ibid:229).

The clock already had a symbolic, or totemic, role and 'carried with it the seeds of control, order, self-restraint' (ibid:79,81). In an industrial setting it became 'a favourite prize for good workers'; and the majority, not possessing a timepiece, had to be woken by wakers sent by the employers.

The workday became defined in temporal rather than natural terms, and in the fulling mills and dye shops, for example, the day was 'bounded by ... time signals' (ibid:74). It was, according to Landes, in the interest of both employers and workers to define the boundaries and to ensure the correct time measurement. It was the people controlling the bells rather than the bells themselves that caused any bad feeling (ibid:74-75).

An alternative account that further illustrates and expands on some of these points is provided by de Grazia in his paper on 'time and work' (1972), in which he again describes the raggedness of the industrialization process. The earliest factories, for example, were still run very personally; small groups of people worked irregular hours and were given verbal instructions. The machines themselves were small, requiring only a small number of hands and when there was no work to be done, for example when the water power failed, the workers would go off early for a day's fishing. Although the workshop might be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. the workers, being on piece rates, would

come and go 'when they liked', according to de Grazia.

The function of the clock was to give an auditory and visual signal to ensure that work began and ended at the same, correct, time. Time had *become* money, a resource or commodity, to produce profit. For this to happen it had to be 'neutralized' (de Grazia:452); the calendar was secularised, and activities other than 'work' took on work's time characteristics. Starkey makes the point thus: 'Time is a social experience and its primary determinant is the experience of work' (Starkey 1988: 95). And Cannon refers to the work of Edward T. Hall which argued that,

'understanding a culture's concept of time is essential to gaining an understanding how a culture assigns meaning to events and how individuals assess whether their time is being valued' (Cannon in Mulgan et al 1995:31).

Some workers accepted the new obligation, 'to give the first and best part of the day to work' (de Grazia:453); but others resisted. Some of the English peasants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries preferred home and poverty to the relatively well-paid factories. Others, such as the free professionals, did not have their time clocked in this way in an industrial setting, and could continue to practise independently.

So, again, the idea of a clear-cut transition is not supported. But de Grazia identifies other fallacies and errors associated with this misrepresentation. One was the notion that people had



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So, again, the idea of a clear-cut transition is not supported. But de Grazia identifies other fallacies and errors associated with this misrepresentation. One was the notion that people had

not worked intensely before industrialization; de Grazia points out that:

'The European farmer and artisan always worked hard, but with a fluctuating rhythm capable of taking wide variations' (ibid:462).

It was the work ethic and Protestantism, according to de Grazia, that had become confused with actual hard work. Furthermore, the early promotion of 'scientific management' undervalued individual ability to find a method that best suited that person. The idea of one best way became widespread.

The most ubiquitous fallacy of all was perhaps the belief - as 'self-evident' - that time was objective, and was represented by clock time, when 'it is one thing to work to your own time, and another to work to someone else's time, and yet another to work to clock time' (ibid:465). Newtonian time - clock time, linear time - became accepted as though there could be no other; it became industrial and scientific Western time. It could never, according to de Grazia, be free time because with work as the main, clock-bound obligation, other time is equally clock-bound (ibid:474).

de Grazia's emphasis on both the commodification of time and the ideals of the Protestant work ethic reveals the influence of the work of E. P. Thompson. Thompson's broadly Marxist interpretation of the effects of the Industrial Revolution hinges on the 'marriage of convenience' of puritanism and capitalism. In 'Time, work discipline, and industrial capitalism' he

suggested that it was this combination that resulted in the commodification of time; clock time on its own could not produce an attitude that saw time-discipline as an imperative (see Adam 1990:111-115). In Thompson's analysis of the new situation, where industrial time involved paid employment and the division of labour, measured time was seen to have taken the place of task oriented time:

'This measurement embodies a simple relationship. Those who are employed experience a distinction between their employer's time and their "own" time. And the employer must use the time of his labour, and see it not wasted: not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent' (Thompson 1967:61).

Thompson's thesis formed part of the movement towards 'cultural' analysis, which turned away from more passive models that can arise from notions of technological determinism, and the more deterministic strands of Marxist theory. But this, again, tended towards a dichotomous before/after representation that is so seductive, but has not been without criticism.

Joyce has suggested that Thompson's model of industrial time lacks an adequate economic account of industrialization itself; it is not exactly clear what 'the industrial revolution' involved.

Whipp (1987) suggests an alternative account, one that emphasises the social construction of time that gives more attention to diversity of experience and the continual negotiation. He again qualifies Thompson's before/after thesis, and does not accept the rather deterministic role of capitalism that can still be found in Thompson's work; he believes that:

'Time in relation to work has been continuously shaped, defined and contested by workers and employers in the context of changing structural pressures contained within the spheres of production and reproduction' (Whipp 1987:211).

The tendency towards a dichotomous model of time in Thompson's work was a consequence, according to Whipp, of so much of his thinking being based on the work of early anthropologists' studies of non-industrial societies. The Industrial Revolution was in this way seen as the catalyst of a fairly sharp transition (the 'big bang' theory already mentioned); and the natural rhythms of non-industrial society as replaced by the regulated discipline of production to clock time.

Whipp takes issue with three aspects of Thompson's proposition. In the first place he believes that there is too much stress on the employer's ability to commodify time; he cites the example of extreme Taylorism which was found to be unproductive and was therefore largely rejected. Furthermore, some of the more mature industries did not make this transition at all; this is Whipp's second point - that, as pointed out earlier, the form taken by

the 'industrial revolution' was far more varied and irregular than has often been supposed. Similarly, and thirdly, even where there were changes these were not necessarily irrevocable but were subject to negotiation - and uncertainty. Not everyone, what is more, moved into an industrial environment. So, fourthly, Thompson is challenged by Whipp for having,

'underestimated the continued range of diversity of how time is experienced by people as both workers and actors in other social settings. ... (He) fails to appreciate the way paid labour and domestic work, and their attendant definitions of time, continued to interact throughout the uneven maturation of industrial societies' (Whipp *ibid*:219).

Whipp offers an alternative analysis to correct what he sees as the neglect of the many varied time-reckoning systems which persist. These have to be understood in terms of their social construction and their 'abstract form' (*ibid*:219), and as a comment on the Industrial Revolution. His model of time and work is made up of three levels: sector, community and enterprise.

The question of sector is one about which there has been much debate in terms of technological determinism. Whipp argues against the idea of an inevitable and linear progression from craft to factory to mass production, and cites the work of Sabel and Zeitlin (1982) as indicating alternative paths. The different sectors display unevenness and diversity, according to Whipp, with evidence of long-term cyclical activity in the

control were part of this, as was the influence of domestic routines. For the clearest statement of his conclusion he refers to the work of McClelland and Berg which suggests that 'industrialisation did not impose an all-embracing, single time/work discipline' (ibid:235). On the contrary:

'Industrialisation opened up a stream of possibilities. Above all, it is the heterogeneous forms of time and how they are differently perceived which emerges on closer inspection' (ibid:235).

He voices concern that social scientists should have accepted uncritically the definitions of time that so clearly represent a legacy of nineteenth century ideas of 'progress'; that is, time as part of 'rational, modern, economic exchange'. This linear, 'progressive' model contributes to a distorted understanding of work in the past, as well as in the present. What is needed for an understanding of the time/work relationship is an analysis based on the social experience and construction of time; this would take into account 'the subjective constructions of time and the plurality of time-reckoning', and would not see work-time as determined by the needs of capital alone (ibid:235).

Whipp's conclusion represents a critique of what became the accepted, unquestioned, model of time as objective, clock time. This model carried within it the distorted representation of the Industrial Revolution, and a definition of work built on a limited and selective - industrial, factory-based - section of the workforce.

## Space and Home

As with time, attempts were made to use space more 'rationally', to produce physical and ideological boundaries that emphasised specific values; in the case of 'home' the values that came to be physically and ideologically separated were, however, the antithesis of rationality.

The process of early suburbanization which can be seen as 'the crystallization of the ideas of privacy and domesticity' stretched from the 1780s to the 1850s and 1860s - coinciding roughly with the Industrial Revolution - according to F. M. L. Thompson (1982). It was again a gradual process but the effect it had on the emergent image of home was quite as profound as was that of time on the new understanding of work. It is the contention of this section that the suburbanization of a specific - middle class - section of society was central to this process. The result was the 'precious institution' of the 'home' (Burnett 1986:190) - segregated, and separated from 'work'.

Industrialization had brought with it factories, smoke, noise and all sorts of 'ugliness' and disease. And although Thompson claims that the largest English towns were suburbanized before the advent of cheap transport (Thompson op cit:5), industrialization provided the technology and the transport that made the spatial separation of the home a viable proposition for a much wider section of the middle classes. The 'omnibus and suburban train should be regarded as permitting, rather than creating, the suburb' (Thompson ibid:5).

For there to be any movement, however, there had to be a desire to leave the cities - which until this time had been seen as the centres of all that was civilized - backed up by sufficient demand from people who could afford to make this choice.

The first of these conditions began to be fulfilled when attitudes towards the countryside changed in the late eighteenth century. At about this time

'it was ceasing to be feared or despised as boorish, backward or hostile, and was coming to be admired by cultivated opinion as the home of all that was natural and virtuous' (Thompson *ibid.*:14).

So although there were alternatives available, such as the spread of urbanisation rather than suburbanisation, the prospect of combining the more acceptable, 'virtuous' aspects of the countryside with the comfort of city-living became increasingly attractive. Thompson suggests that the demand came from the section of the middle class that identified most closely with the aristocracy. In his words, it offered 'the more imitative and self-effacing sections of the middle class' ... 'the illusion of bringing country and gentrification into the urban setting' (Thompson *ibid.*:15). It offered what Burnett describes as 'the paraphernalia of gentility' (Burnett *op cit*:100).

Demand also came from the increasing urban population, and the growing number of new professionals; the ramifications of the Industrial Revolution had increased their number, and the demand



for their services (Burnett ibid:97). So the 'professional' class grew as a proportion of the workforce, as well as gradually taking in a wider variety of occupations - medicine, education, literature, science and art as well as religion and law (Thompson ibid:188). Together with other growing middle class groups - for example those white collar workers involved in trade or commerce, collectively described as 'clerks' (Carey 1992:46) - this section of society could exercise choice in its demand for new homes (Burnett op cit:98).

The resulting growth of the suburbs expressed, therefore, the desire for the physical separation of the home, in a more 'rural' setting. Furthermore,

'This "new" class was the most family-conscious and home-centred generation to have emerged in English history' (Burnett ibid:98).

Exclusively residential areas were developed, away from the traffic, noise, smells, and 'lower orders' - and all the other undesirable features of city life. With motorised transport it was no longer necessary to have coach houses or mews and men servants to look after the horses; but it was desirable to have at least one female servant. And although the earlier terraced house could form the basis of the prescribed standards (Muthesius 1982), it was the detached and semi-detached houses for single families that were 'of the suburban essence' and did not exist before the nineteenth century (Thompson op cit:7). The semi-detached house was 'the ultimate reduction of the country house' (Thompson op cit:8).

The image of suburban life that was promulgated was romantic, idyllic and remote from ugliness (Burnett op cit:106). It was, according to Burnett, the physical expression not only of a higher degree of comfort and elegance, but particular values;

'values and beliefs which were imbued almost with religious authority - the belief in male superiority, from which it followed that man alone was capable of wielding economic, political and legal power, and that wives and children owed only obedience to this God-like creature; the belief that a "lady" did not work' (Burnett ibid:98).

The function of the home was to 'comfort and purify, to give relief and privacy from the cares of the world', in line with 'Christian values', and above all:

'to proclaim by its ordered arrangements, polite behaviour, cleanliness, tidiness and distinctive taste, that its members belonged to a class of substance, culture and respectability' (Burnett ibid:99).

The specific design of the house was an essential consideration. For if the new homes were to be some kind of antidote to industrialism and commercialism, the architecture had to reflect these aspirations. From the 1790s, therefore, the type of architecture that became popular tended towards the 'Picturesque', demonstrating an 'anti-civic ethic'; that is:

'(it) promoted the gospel of individuality ... "Rus in urbe" meant every man possessing his own distinctively composed villa amidst his own shrubbery' (Nicholas Taylor, quoted in Burnett:106).

The 'villa' might also take the form of the Greek revival or,

later, the Gothic style. Popular architects such as Loudon (1783 - 1843) were criticised by others for pandering to a sentimental, nostalgic style - 'sentimental antiquarianism'. But as Burnett points out, this type of architecture had many admirers. Richard Cobbett, for example, voicing an opinion that was probably more widespread than that of the critics, believed that industrialism had not only destroyed the natural beauty of the land but the natural order of society also. It was apparently seen by Cobbett and his followers as 'breeding paganism and vulgarity'; so by reverting to 'natural' architecture 'natural morality' might also be restored (Burnett, *ibid.*:116).

Architecture and religion were, according to Stuart Durant, 'the two great Victorian obsessions' (Durant 1992:7). C. F. A. Voysey (1857-1941), the son of a clergymen, was according to Durant, 'the first popular architect' (Durant 1992:7), and it was his designs that were often emulated in the later suburban developments. The influence of ideas of nature and of virtue can be found in Voysey's own writings, when for example he said that,

'It is lamentable when men's minds are so absorbed by material conditions that they lose all sensibility to the higher forms of usefulness and happiness' (Voysey, in Durant *ibid*:113).

He believed that human nature combined the material and the spiritual, and that what he saw as the 'ugliness' in life around him was 'largely due to our materialistic habit of mind' (*ibid*:113). He emphasised individuality, and seemed to accept the existence of 'the difference in the material condition of

men'; but believed that all should 'respond to the same virtues - love, reverence, humility, self-sacrifice, simplicity, truthfulness' (ibid:114). He believed that although 'the machine has come to liberate men's minds for more intellectual work than was provided for them by the sawpit', nevertheless 'the human quality in familiar objects has in many cases been driven out by the machine' (ibid:114). He lamented the production of highly polished surfaces, so easily achieved with modern machinery, because,

'it 'can be produced without brains and in most cases can only be produced by the elimination of all human thought and feeling' (ibid:114).

He advocated a 'sense of duty' and believed that 'we may learn something from the tree of the spirit of domestic happiness'; homes should 'avoid all ugliness' and ostentation (ibid:115). He advocated authenticity and modesty in the home, and perhaps above all a 'reverence for nature' as a 'fruitful source of beauty' (ibid:114) - reflected in his designs.

Thompson suggested that it was the garden that was the root of the demand for this type of house. It was 'an essential attribute of the single family house', offering privacy and seclusion behind hedges and fences (op cit:14). It was the garden that represented the country and 'naturalness'. McDowell sees the 'suburban compromise' as part of the 'romantic ideology glorifying nature (and) rural life' (McDowell 1983:149). Madigan and Munro have suggested that,

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'the Garden City Movement set the seal, at least in

the English cultural tradition, on the suburban house and garden as representing the epitome of "domestic bliss"' (Madigan and Munro 1994:1).

Burnett quotes from *An Encyclopaedia of Domestic Economy* of 1844, praising the healthier life offered by the suburbs, and

'the pleasure to be derived from a garden and from the cheerful and enlivening effect of trees and vegetation in general, together with quiet and absence of smoke'.

An 'air of rusticity' was imposed upon even the smallest 'garden plot', according to Thompson. This he saw as part of what was later viewed as a general 'preoccupation with outward appearances, a fussy attention to the trifling details of genteel living' (op cit:2).

The outward appearances did not stop at the front door, however, The entrance hall provided another level of protection - ensuring a secure, manageable area within, and a social distance from those without. Burnett describes how this worked:

'Callers would be received by a servant at the front door and shown into the hall to wait while the member of the family was sought or while the mistress decided whether or not she was 'at home'; the hall was necessary to "hold" visitors and to protect the family by space and time from intruders' (Burnett, op cit:198).

Inside the house it would be the drawing room to which the visitor would be led, this being the room reserved for 'calls' and 'at homes', as well as by guests before and after dinner.

The 'highly complex and ritualized activity', which calling became, 'functioned to establish and confirm social position and to cement the relationships between middle-class families in the neighbourhood' (Dyhouse, in Lewis 1986:38). There were three types of calling: the first when there was no expectation of seeing the hostess, when a card was left in the silver tray in the hall; the second when the caller was admitted by the maid, 'because her mistress had confirmed that she was "at home"'; and the third being 'the institution of the "At Home Day"' (Dyhouse *ibid*:38-39). At Home Days were held once a month, when the hostess had to await visitors in the drawing room, dressed in her best afternoon dress, with a 'good tea' prepared (*ibid*:39). Only when daughters had 'come out' were their names printed on their mother's cards.

Respectability required a minimum of three reception rooms: a dining-room, a drawing-room and a morning-room - the latter, sometimes referred to as the parlour or breakfast-parlour, was for family and informal use. It was likely to be used more by the woman of the house, and in larger houses the boundaries between male and female 'territory' could be more clearly defined. The Victorians perfected the divisions, with the study, library, billiard-room, smoking-room and gun-room being male territory, while the ladies' sitting-room, boudoirs and dressing-rooms were female territory (Burnett *ibid*:198; see also MATRIX 1985:65). In cases where men worked at home - for example clergymen - the study became the paternal *inner sanctum* (Dyhouse *op cit*:30).

So, although in the larger houses the men had specific areas of their own, the general expectation was that the man would spend most of the day away from the home; his responsibility was to provide for the home. The pattern of commuting emphasised the 'social distance between the public, male world of business and the professions and the private, feminine world of the household' (Dyhouse op cit:31). This division can be seen reflected in the law as it related to 'homemakers' and 'breadwinners' (Atkins and Hoggett 1984), and in the planning and other regulations and constraints that upheld the segregation of the home (Walsh et al 1986).

In the home itself there was a general trend towards 'feminization'; the woman, cut off from public life, 'turned (her) energies to home-making, as no generation before had done' (Burnett op cit:113). Increasingly complex rules and rituals ensured respectability, although 'many of these rituals had a tenuous relationship to the efficient performance of household tasks' (Roberts 1991:23); and the suburbs in particular came to be identified by intellectuals of the time 'as the site not just of triviality but of specifically female triviality' (Carey 1992:52).

It was the woman who nevertheless managed the household, making decisions and effecting a fair degree of autonomy. The care of the children, the entertainment of friends, as well as the everyday practicalities of supervising the servants were all her responsibility. The image one gets is of the woman in a



cocooned space; within the layers of protective boundaries she was not unlike a queen bee - commanding deference from others while at the same time almost totally confined. The standards expected of her, as an 'ideal wife' were rigorous and demanding.

The 'lady of the house' was expected to provide a comfortable home - removed from all meanness - as well as emotional stability for her husband and children. The focus of the home was above all the family, and its purpose largely one of moral education; the children were to be brought up in Christian observance, with polite manners and respect for virtues such as punctuality and tidiness. It was also to be a place where 'good society' could be entertained, and where the man could 'retreat from the cares of the world and take an honest pride in (his) possessions and achievements' (Burnett op cit:190). His wife was expected to conduct herself with sobriety and above all respectability; the home was the place where she and her children were 'inviolate from the temptations of the wicked world' (Burnett op cit:196).

In an article entitled 'Bearers of Spiritual Values', John Tyerman Williams provides a list of the four main functions of women at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

'One was to embody spiritual and moral ideals which men admired but felt they could not wholeheartedly practise without hindering their worldly success. A second was to provide a home that was a haven of peace and comfort. Another was to bear and rear children. A fourth was to be decorative' (Williams 1991:25-26).

As he points out, there could be difficulties reconciling some of these expectations: 'delicate spirituality, for instance, with acting as a brood mare' (ibid:26).

It is again clear that the values they were asked to nurture were to some extent in tension with - and an antidote to - those of commercialism, aggressive business methods and whatever else was necessary for men's 'achievements'. This divided environment of the middle-class male between the demands of the business world and the 'supposedly undemanding comforts of the family home' was, according to Thompson, 'what the rise of suburbia was all about' (op cit:8). Even the professions, with their legitimacy assured by a code of ethics and emphasis on service, could not entirely ignore market forces. The religious, moral and social values of the home would provide an anchor against outside pressures.

It has been argued here that the middle classes were at the centre of these specific values attached to the home, to produce what can be seen as a 'bourgeois ideal'. This needs to be qualified to some extent in that the aristocracy and the upper working classes shared these ideals in many respects: privacy, respectability, pride in the running of the house and domestic ritual (Thompson op cit:12). What was distinctive about the middle classes, however, was that it was they who spatially removed themselves into areas that were specifically designated as residential. This was not necessary for those who already had both town and country residences - and was not possible for those

who could not afford it, and who were more likely to remain in the more mixed urban and city areas. By physically removing themselves in this way, it was the middle classes who separated 'home' from 'work'.

## **Conclusion**

This account has emphasised the way in which the accepted (legitimate) meanings of 'work' and 'home' need to be seen in the context of changing perceptions and use of time and space. They were based on very limited models (a time-bound industrial model of work and a spatially segregated suburban model of home) that were in many ways contradictory. An acknowledgement of complexity and continuity was further suppressed by a simplistic account of the Industrial Revolution. Two aspects of this process can be identified.

First, it becomes apparent that whereas modern, industrial time had been dissociated from all that was natural, the space associated with the suburban home was seen as close to nature. In this way the home was intended to counteract some of the less acceptable aspects of 'progress'.

Second, the changes in the use and perception of time, particularly in relation to work, can be seen as related to the demands of industry and a capitalist economy. Legitimacy rested on the close connection with the ideas of progress, industrialization, rationalism, quantification and so forth - and

the way objective time could be treated 'scientifically'. It was therefore in harmony with the move towards liberal economics and the free (rational) market, with all the assumptions of enlightened self-interest and commercialism this entailed.

The spatially removed home, on the other hand, seems to have carried with it almost opposite sources of legitimacy, far more closely related to a traditional, conservative ideology. The emphasis was on the restraining influence of custom, morality, the family, the monarch, the Church, private property and the 'natural' order of society; industrialization and commercialism were treated with suspicion. Conservatism by definition resists change that threatens continuity and this would - and does - include 'progress'.

There has always been a tension between the liberal economic and conservative ideologies, and this tension appears to have been resolved by means of the temporal and spatial separation of activities associated with each - leaving the 'rational' world unfettered, and the 'non-rational' world intact. Liberal economics (like socialism) reflects the rational Modern Age, whereas conservatism does not.

The contradictions were therefore to be found at an ideological level of legitimacy associated with ideas underpinning, or interacting with, the Modern Age. It is this level that needs to be addressed next, and it is the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE 'AGE OF REASON': AND THE RATIONALITY OF THE MODERN AGE

The Enlightenment, the 'age of reason', initiated the transition to the modern age. Its legacy was complex, however: including much that was taken for granted, as well as the means by which this could be questioned. It is the contention of this chapter that the ideological boundary between 'work' and 'home' needs to be analysed at this level in order to understand the basis of the assumptions underlying the legitimacy of each. If the image of 'work' reflected the modern age, that of 'home' did not; modern time and modern space played a crucial role in this, as they did also in the construction of the modern organisation which came to epitomise the modern age.

#### The Enlightenment legacy

In 1959 C. Wright Mills wrote:

'We are at the ending of what is called The Modern Age. Just as Antiquity was followed by several centuries of Oriental ascendancy, which Westerners provincially call The Dark Ages, so now The Modern Age is being succeeded by a post-modern period' (Mills 1959: 184).

He believed that the 'The Sociological Imagination' was necessary to see beyond what had become apparently taken-for-granted: the modern age, with its esteem for all things rational, especially science, resulting he believed in certain concepts becoming

'fetishised' (Mills 1959:47). Mills proposed that it was the sociological imagination that could take one beyond this level:

'By its use men whose mentalities have swept only a series of limited orbits often come to feel as if suddenly awakened in a house with which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar' (Mills *ibid*:14).

Ways of seeing things that seemed quite acceptable before 'now seem to them products of a mind unaccountably dense' (*ibid*:14). Mills described better than anyone the sociologist's need to dig beneath and beyond what is 'given'; to find theoretical frameworks and concepts that provide explanations. But at the same time, and above all, to question the unquestioned.

Following Max Weber, Mills identified a generalised rationality as having become taken for granted as both the norm and the standard of the Modern Age. This could be traced back to the 'reason and freedom' of Enlightenment thought that had been distorted in such a way that the resulting rationality was a negation of reason - and of freedom. The irony that he exposed was that the Enlightenment project developed into a somewhat dogmatic philosophical, even ideological, position as a consequence of the reaction it represented to what had gone before; it was just such a dogma that it had rejected.

The Enlightenment - the 'age of reason' - can be taken to have emerged in the eighteenth century, especially in France where the *philosophes* (notably Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau) rejected the *ancien regime* (Becker 1932:33). It gathered strength

throughout the Western world as the established order and established beliefs came to be questioned; they were increasingly incompatible with the influential developments in the natural and physical sciences as well as the new ideas concerning human nature and the doctrines of equality, liberty, and universal reason. The old certainties of religion, revelation and the 'blind veneration of classical antiquity' (Smart 1990:17) - of the absolute, and unquestioned authority that these provided - gave way to a search for new certainties. These would be based on reasoned truths, and a commitment to 'progress'. Goethe - a considerable influence on Kant and therefore also on Weber - observed that:

'Superstition, like many other fancies, very easily loses its power when, instead of flattering our vanity, it stands in the way of it' (Becker op cit:1).

The result was the Modern Age, whether in the form of socialism with the emphasis on equality and the impediment that private property presented to this, or (economic) liberalism with the emphasis on individual liberty or freedom and the right to property. They shared an Enlightenment commitment to progress, in a way that conservatism - with its emphasis on tradition, the 'natural order', the Church, and the family, and its antipathy to industrial commercialism and 'trade' - never did.

In order to understand what this 'modernization' meant, Bryan Turner has advised that 'the most direct way ... is still via Weber's sociology of rationalization' (Turner 1990:6); a

necessary reminder if, as Martin Albrow suggests, Weber's 'overarching interpretation of the trajectory of modern society, the thesis of all-embracing rationalisation, has been almost completely neglected' (Albrow 1990:3).

Allbrow identifies 'core features' in Weber's theory. In the first place, Weber emphasised the importance of *verstehen*, or understanding, as the goal of any scientific exploration. He regarded 'scientific method' and subjective understanding as equally important, which meant that empirical work was essential to his interpretative analysis. The common denominator was the human action that constituted the 'reality' to be investigated. Values and ideas such as rationality contribute to this 'reality', and are therefore an essential part of research, requiring explanation. The focus must therefore be on meanings.

Weber took an historical perspective. Meanings, he believed, should be seen as created over time; and ideas should, furthermore, be 'pursued beyond their limits in existing thought' (Albrow *ibid*:3). Here is surely the essence of critical enquiry; Albrow further quotes Weber:

'Nothing should be more sharply emphasized than the proposition that the knowledge of the *cultural significance of concrete historical events and patterns* is exclusively and solely the final end which, among other means, concept construction and the criticism of constructs also seek to serve' (Weber 1949:111; quoted in Albrow *ibid*:280).



Weber revealed the cultural significance of rationality, associated most closely with western industrial capitalism and Protestant ascetism. For the culture he was dealing with had already been transformed by reason's successor, that same rationality; in these terms it had become part of 'reality', even 'fact' (Albrow ibid:31). The idea of rationality had been translated into action: calculation, science, technology, the work ethic - and bureaucracy. Weber saw its alienating potential as well as its ultimate limits, partly because he recognised that the achievements of science and technology were neither necessarily beneficial nor permanent. The Enlightenment ideal of the domination of nature was easily transferred to the domination of people. Rationalization became an 'iron cage', of rationality without reason - or freedom.

Weber saw bureaucracy as a prime example of the increasing rationalization; it was a defining feature of modern society. Whereas other forms of legitimacy were based on emotion or custom, the legitimacy of bureaucracy was based on rationality, and was impersonal. Weber's ideal type bureaucracy was characterised by impersonal but clearly defined areas of responsibility, hierarchy and supervision, together with abstract rules, officials chosen according to technical knowledge or expertise, and a strict separation of private and official income (Gerth & Mills, 1948:196-198).

His perception of the necessity for the 'complete' separation of work from the household, associated with his model of bureaucracy

(see Giddens, 1984:153) and 'modern economic life', may however have reflected the rationalist logic of the Enlightenment legacy together with the selective misrepresentation of the Industrial Revolution referred to in Chapter 2. This distortion - and the glossing over of variation - seems only to have reinforced the validity of rationality, providing an apparently tangible manifestation. Weber's conclusion that rationality was the essential *validating idea* inherited by the modern age was all the more cogent.

But Weber also believed that rationality was basically irrational, and likely to produce dire consequences:

'It is still more horrible ... to think that the world could one day be filled with nothing but those little cogs, little men clinging to little jobs and striving towards bigger ones' (Weber, in Coser & Rosenberg, 1969:455).

This 'passion for bureaucracy' was, for him, 'enough to drive one to despair' (ibid:455). He wondered what could oppose this 'parceling-out of the soul', and provide protection from the 'supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life' (ibid:455).

It was this pessimistic diagnosis - and prognosis - that was picked up by Mills, who identified the modern age as the age of the Cheerful Robot, exhibiting rationality without reason. In its new form, the Enlightenment belief in the promise of the natural sciences had become a 'messianic and now politically naive admiration of physical science as a model of thinking and

action' (Mills op cit:101). Like Weber, he believed that bureaucracy - the essence of rational domination - had contributed to the loss of reason:

'The growth of (rational, bureaucratic) organizations, within an increasing division of labour sets up more and more spheres of life, work and leisure, in which reasoning is difficult or impossible' (Mills op cit: 186).

This theme was extended by Frank Hearn (1985). Reason, said Hearn, had been instrumentalised - and therefore reduced to rationality which is antagonistic to freedom - in the service of industrial capitalism and the progress promised by the Enlightenment (ibid:14). Horkheimer identified this as the 'dialectic of the Enlightenment'; the contradiction between Enlightenment reason, which is essentially critical, and instrumental reason, which is uncritical. In the latter case concepts are instrumentalised in terms of what exists which 'precludes from serious consideration, and relegates to the level of obsolete speculation, that which should be' (Hearn op cit:17). - critical reason includes the notion, at least, of that which 'could' or 'should' be. Quoting Marcuse's description of 'one-dimensional thought', this process has the effect that 'the criteria for judging a given state of affairs are those offered by the given state of affairs' (Marcuse 1964:115-6; quoted in Hearn op cit:17). Legitimacy comes to depend on conformity, and on this self-legitimizing 'reduction of thought' (ibid).

Within this context of critical analysis, Hearn cites Habermas's distinction between purposive rational action and symbolic interaction systems. The former, with the aim of increasing our control over nature,

'represents the dimension of work in as much as technical progress is measured quantitatively with respect to scientific and technological improvements in the productive forces and the growing material standard of living they deliver' (Hearn op cit:21).

Giddens identifies this as an interest in technical control (Giddens, 1976:61), whereas the system of symbolic interaction is associated with an interest in understanding (ibid:61), and

'emerges from the pursuit of the practical interest in enhanced mutual understanding and represents the dimension of social interaction which gives rise to human culture' (Hearn op cit:21).

Both were deemed necessary for human emancipation, but Hearn suggested that what had happened amounted to both Mills' rationality without reason and Marcuse's one-dimensional society, with the dimension of culture having been absorbed, according to Habermas, into that of work: 'In this way traditional structures are increasingly subordinated to conditions of instrumental or strategic rationality' (Habermas 1971:98). The institutional framework 'legitimizes itself through the rationality of the market' (ibid:97). As a consequence, 'our capacity to formulate ends, purposes, and objectives and through them to reflect on the established order is thwarted' (Hearn op cit:23); our ability to question the taken for granted is lost.

Central to what became taken for granted - in social theory as elsewhere - were specific perceptions of time and space, as empty categories, influenced to a great extent by Kant (Giddens 1990:140-142). It was the separation of time and space, together with their 'emptying' that generated modernity's 'dynamism', according to Giddens (Giddens 1990:16). This could be traced back to Enlightenment thinkers who, in their search for a better society and human emancipation, 'had to pay attention to the rational ordering of space and time' (Harvey 1989:258). Furthermore, according to Harvey,

'all Enlightenment projects had in common a relatively unified common-sense of what space and time were all about and why their rational ordering was important' (ibid:258).

Despite being basic categories of human existence, time and space were therefore rarely questioned, and yet:

'how we represent space and time matters, because it affects how we and others interpret and then act with respect to the world' (ibid:205).

And following the Enlightenment logic that changes in knowledge will influence the move towards progress, then:

'changes in our conceptual apparatus (including representations of space and time) can have material consequences for the ordering of daily life' (ibid:204).

This must be particularly true where specific concepts have acquired legitimacy; and, in this case, where Modernity itself was, and is, 'deeply and intrinsically sociological' (Giddens, 1990:43).

It will be noted, however, that whereas the concept of rational time seems to have served well the demands of a capitalist industrial society, and the idea of progress, the concept of rational space seems to have found a more limited sphere of legitimacy. Massey makes a comparison between the way in which time and space have been viewed in general:

'Time is often associated with Becoming, and further associated with terms such as History, Progress, Civilization, Science, Politics, Reason. Space on the other hand is more usually equated with Being and the bundle of words which are associated with it are very different. They include stasis, reproduction, nostalgia, emotion, aesthetics, and the body' (Massey, 1992).

Modernity emphasised *becoming*, in time, rather than *being*, in space. The dominance of the former over the latter echoes the relationship between Habermas' purposive rational (work related) and symbolic interaction (culture related) systems, respectively; as it does also the relationship between liberal economics and conservatism.

### **Modern Time**

Modern time is essentially Newtonian time:

'Humanity has created an artificial time environment punctuated by mechanical contrivances and electronic impulses: a time plane that is quantitative, fast-paced, efficient and predictable' (Rifkin, 1987:12; quoted in Adam, 1990:104).

This definition of time, reinforced by the Industrial Revolution, enabled it to be measured and treated 'scientifically'. As applied to work, clock time was not only central to the 'making of the modern world' (Landes 1983), but had 'become the measure of work where work was the measure of time in the earlier historical periods' (Adam, *ibid*:112). Modern time was assimilated by the industrial, capitalist definition of work, and the emphasis on efficiency; nowhere more obviously than in relation to F. W. Taylor's scientific management. It was acknowledged that:

'a strict temporal order is particularly pertinent for rationalised, bureaucratically structured organisations' (Adam, *op cit*).

The idea of rationality found its ideal medium in this context, and in a definition of 'work' founded on an industrial model of employment in an organization.

It was the Newtonian model of time that had legitimacy, and 'affects ... our understanding of reality, and our practices of work, leisure, and even sleep' (Adam 1990:163). Echoing W. I. Thomas's 'definition of the situation', and the influence of constructed 'definition', Adam reflects that:

'as long as we relate to that time as an absolute, objective reality it is real in its consequences' (*ibid*:41).

Natural time and natural rhythms had been separated from time, according to Adam, in the process of 'decontextualization';

Giddens refers to the process of 'disembedding'. Modern time became a detached and abstract concept. It came to 'dominate the Western world to such an extent that it is related to as being time and as if there were no other times' (Adam 1990:67), and to have a 'taken-for-granted status in social theory' (ibid:68). This perception of time, having been reified (even 'fetishised') in the West, was 'assumed to be a universal form of human consciousness', according to Elias. Such a view is, he says:

'the result of philosophers simply using the concepts available to them in their own society ... projecting them to all of mankind past, present, or future, as universals of human perception, without considering how they arose in an intergenerational learning process' (in Mennell 1992:213).

### **Modern Space**

Modern space, like modern time, has been rendered quantifiable and amenable to scientific methods. It was removed from 'locale', becoming 'empty', therefore functionally substitutable (Giddens 1990:18-19).

In his critique of the modern conceptualization of space, Henri Lefebvre saw it as having become not only 'abstract' but fragmented; he linked this to developments in science, as well as to the progress of capitalism. In *The Production of Space*, he proposed a reconciliation between the 'mental space' of philosophers and the 'real space' in which we live (Lefebvre 1991



translation:2).

According to Lefebvre, the shift to the 'science of space' allowed mathematicians to 'appropriate' space (ibid:2). This kind of scientific, Cartesian, thinking 'eliminated the "collective subject", the people as creator of a particular language, as carrier of specific etymological sequences' (ibid:4). Under Cartesian logic space had been transformed into 'Object opposed to Subject' (ibid:1). The kind of ideas that dominated had been presented as 'extra-ideological' (ibid:6) and objective.

The resulting *abstract space* 'took over from historical space' (ibid:49); it 'related negatively to that which perceives and underpins it - namely, the historical and religio-political spheres' (ibid:50). As a result, 'History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret' (ibid:51). It is this negativity that Lefebvre saw as having within it 'the seeds of a new kind of space' which he called 'differential space' (ibid:52). This was the fragmentation that resulted in social space becoming 'an unlimited multiplicity of uncountable sets of social spaces' reflecting the operation of the market, including the market in spaces themselves (ibid:52). Spaces became associated with specialised activities (Massey 1993:24).

The influence of Enlightenment thinking is again evident:

'This essentially empiricist interpretation of spaciality reflects the "substantive-attributive

structure" that has dominated scientific thought since the philosophy of the Enlightenment, a powerful heritage to which spatial and social theorists have repeatedly appealed for both insight and legitimacy' (Soja, in Gregory & Urry, 1985:100).

Social space, according to Soja, was therefore treated as physical space (ibid:100); and the resulting 'homogenization of space' was not compatible with the more humanistic idea of place (Harvey op cit:257). Furthermore, whereas the distinction between sacred and profane space had previously been an important one, this became blurred in an increasingly secular society (Kern 1983:179). Space became both political and ideological (Soja, op cit:101).

In architecture, the functional use of space characterised the Modern Movement (or modernism) earlier this century; the approach was 'positivistic, technocentric, and rationalistic' (Harvey, 1989:35). This gave a central role to 'the neglected "empty" spaces that formerly had only a supporting role, bringing them to the centre of attention' (Kern ibid:179). Among the prominent names were Gropius, Mies van der Rohe - 'less is more' - and Le Corbusier, whose houses were to be 'machines for living in'. Here was a 'rational' approach to architecture (Brindley 1994) that found favour with a select few, but not amongst the majority of middle-class home-owners; and its urbanism challenged the status quo (ibid:3).

The architects of the Modern Movement 'loathed the mock timbering, they loathed the little boxy rooms, they loathed the endless unplanned sprawl and haphazard layout of semi-detached estates' (Quiney 1986:164) - all associated with suburbia. The post-war Modern Movement came to be associated with open-plan housing, and with public housing, 'high density, urban housing' (Brindley 1994:4), for which the underlying rationale was not without (socialist) Enlightenment ideals:

'Prominent modernists sought a new architecture for a new society; for, that is, their socialist utopias. They viewed architecture as a means of social liberation' (Lipman and Harris 1988:191).

These developments were seen by critics as demonstrating the arrogance of architects' 'blind faith in progress, the mythology of science and technology' and 'belief that man himself does not know how he must dwell and live' (Portoghesi, quoted in Rose 1991:157). Such architecture was seen as 'ideology opposing life'. Modernism was largely rejected as far as housing was concerned, whereas commercial (urban) modernist architecture commanded some legitimacy. Harvey sees the latter as representing a 'subterranean celebration of corporate power and rationality' (Harvey 1989:36). The Modern Age was essentially urban, and identified by Simmel with the metropolis (Nisbet 1970:308); it manifested the dominance of 'the objective spirit' over 'the subjective spirit' (ibid:311).

It was the move from logical positivism towards more humanistic

and phenomenological architecture (Norberg-Schulz 1980; Seaman 1982; Perez-Gomez 1984) - and the retrieval of 'place' (Relph 1976; Proshansky et al 1983) - that restored 'home' as a relevant concept within architecture (Allsopp 1974). But the public perception of 'home' - that is, amongst those who could express their choice - had throughout remained closer to the traditional or vernacular architecture so despised by self-respecting modernists. This perception of home had been established before the Modern Movement, but was enhanced by the segregation that the rationalism of functional zoning imposed. It was in the distinction between 'industrial zones', 'commercial zones', 'residential zones', and so forth, that the modern search for order was to be found (Bauman 1992:xv-xvi); what Giddens referred to as 'time-space regionalization' (Giddens 1987).

#### **Modern Time, Modern Space and the Modern Organization**

In his 1984 discussion of 'time, space and regionalization', Giddens made the link between Weber's ideal type bureaucracy and Foucault's analysis of organizations, both of which stressed:

'the emergence of novel types of administrative power, generated by the concentrated organization of human activities through their precise specification and co-ordination' (Giddens, 1984:151).

He suggested that although, on a first reading, the transformation of time and space may seem to be missing from Weber's analysis of bureaucracy, it is merely implicit rather than explicit. Weber had pointed to the control of time as being a characteristic of bureaucracy and essential to the modern

capitalist enterprise. Double-entry book-keeping, files and documents - all emphasised by Weber - made possible the control of both past and future.

Space was similarly implicit in Weber's work. An 'office' was defined as a specific space, as well as a position in the bureaucratic hierarchy. The physical separation of one office from another was important in terms of autonomy, and its separation from the home and family reinforced an impersonal and disciplined organization. But Giddens additionally pointed to the way in which 'differentiation of locales' defined different types of operation, and suggested the City of London, with its 'sheer concentration in one area', as an example.

Foucault had concentrated on extreme types of disciplinary organization (similar to Goffman's 'total institutions'). But Giddens made the point that these are atypical; and disciplinary power can be found in more typical institutions such as factories, offices and schools. Furthermore:

'The journey to work (or school) probably indicates as much about the institutional character of modern societies as do carceral organizations. The time-space separation of different sectors of social life may indeed be the condition of the large-scale operation of disciplinary power' (Giddens, 1984:154).

In 1987 Giddens took this argument further: the modern world - the world of standardized time and space - 'is the world of

organizations' (Giddens, 1987:155). He defined organizations as social systems which are able to 'bracket time-space'; information is at its maximum, is monitored and retrieved, giving 'control of system reproduction'. The use of information in this way also permits 'control over the timing and spacing of the activities of individuals' whose behaviour becomes part of the organization (ibid:154). And the impersonally defined rules, that were so clearly identified previously by Weber, meant that 'high levels of presence-availability' are not necessary, and furthermore that 'time-space distancing' - over large areas of time-space - are possible (ibid:164).

Such organizations 'only really began to proliferate with the advent of modernity' (ibid:153); they epitomised modern culture and the rational use both of time and space. These modern organizations have three distinctive characteristics, according to Giddens. First, *surveillance*, in the form of supervision, which ultimately meant the lack of autonomy. Second, the use of *specific locales*, which could facilitate the concentration of power, functional specialization, and the association between work and 'the division of the day into labour-time and leisure time, and with the division of the week into the working week and the weekend' (ibid:158). Finally, Giddens cited the *timetable* as being distinctive of the modern organization. These are 'time-space organizing devices', and evidence of the 'triumph of clock time'; only in high trust positions could they be treated flexibly.

Giddens noted the relationship between the organization, so defined, and power - and, following Michels, the tendency towards oligarchy the larger the organization becomes. The legitimation is based on impersonal rules and is, in Weber's words, rational-legal. But Giddens believed that there are further implications, not identified by Weber, which are specifically to do with the zoning of time-space (ibid:163-164). He concluded that:

'in the connection between "organization" as a problem of the bracketing of time-space, and "organizations" as specific features of modern culture, we find issues of the foremost importance for the social sciences' (ibid:165).

It could be argued that this is so not least because such organizations, and their distinctive use of time and space, have become taken for granted as the norm. They have become, in Weber's terms, the 'legitimate order' which other systems - and other work situations - contravene. Such a conclusion indicates a need to question the unquestioned, to look at instances where the legitimate order has been contravened. This is necessary if new ways of seeing things, as advocated by C. Wright Mills, are to be found. This has implications for methodology, the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### Rationale for methodology

A methodology that would permit new ways of seeing things was a central consideration from the outset; a review of previous research and literature having suggested that certain concepts, together with associated meanings and legitimacy, had become taken for granted. A sample that would challenge existing assumptions, particularly regarding 'home' and 'work', was necessary, as was an analysis that would acknowledge the social, cultural and ideological construction of these concepts. This meant, therefore, that three broad criteria, arising from the first three chapters, had to be considered:

1. Following from chapter 1, a **theoretical sample** of men and women - neither 'teleworkers' nor 'homeworkers' as such - would be targeted; the criteria being that they used their home as their place of work and were self-employed rather than employees. They would represent a group that had clearly crossed the boundary between home and work.

2. Following from chapter 2, there should be a **hermeneutic approach** that focused on the meaning of words - particularly 'home' and 'work' - from the point of view of those concerned. At a theoretical



and ideological level, chapter 3 had further indicated that there should be a **critical edge** to this approach, to ensure a questioning of the taken for granted.

3. Following from 2, above, a qualitative methodology that allowed concepts to arise from the data, in a continuous and interactive process, was appropriate; this implied the principles of **grounded theory**.

These features contributed to the methodology, and are considered in greater depth below.

#### 1. Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling is an approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), who originally defined it as:

'the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges' (ibid:45).

The aim is to sample not people as such but what Strauss and Corbin refer to as incidents; that is, what people do, how they interact, and the conditions that give rise to that action and interaction. Sampling is driven (Glaser and Strauss originally used the term controlled) by theoretical concerns. Categories can be generated, and these can form the basis of the identification of relevant concepts; more focused data gathering and analysis can follow. Theoretical sampling is cumulative

because 'concepts and their relationships also accumulate through the interplay of data collection and analysis' (ibid:178) - part of the 'back and forth' (Glaser and Strauss) or 'flip-flop' (Henwood and Pidgeon 1993) referred to earlier. There may be an initial sampling, with data gathering on a wide range of areas, followed by greater focus on specific areas. In the research reported here, this meant pilot interviews, main interviews, and a survey involving mainly open-ended questions. The concern is for the representativeness of concepts; each interview may, for example, 'refer to many examples of the same phenomenon' (ibid:178). The aim, that is, is not to generalize but to specify; Miles and Huberman referred to qualitative samples being purposive rather than random, made up of fewer people in fewer 'global settings' (Miles and Huberman 1984:36). Theoretical samples may be quite small if they serve the research purpose.

Henwood and Pidgeon considered theoretical sampling to be one of the criteria by which to judge qualitative research. This kind of sampling can make use of 'negative case analysis' to challenge assumptions (Henwood and Pidgeon, in Hammersley 1993:23). The group targeted were neither homeworkers nor teleworkers - and represented neither of the associated models. The broadly independent and self-employed white-collar group targeted for this research were nevertheless a negative case, in normative terms, merely because they were using their home as their place of work.

## 2. A methodology of interpretation - hermeneutics with a critical intent

Hermeneutics can be defined as 'the art, skill or theory of interpretation, of understanding the significance of human actions, utterances, products and institutions' (Bullock and Stallybrass 1983:280-281). Those who follow the traditions of hermeneutical philosophy have 'emphasised the importance of meaning' (Trigg 1985:195). Trigg contrasted the attitude of a physical scientist who investigates 'how things are' with an interpreter of some aspect of the human world who has to understand 'what is said'; the emphasis in the latter, hermeneutical, position is on 'understanding and communication' (ibid:195).

Hermeneutics can therefore be placed within naturalism, as opposed to positivism. Henwood and Pidgeon make the contrast between the *experimental, hypothetico-deductive or positivist* approach and the *naturalistic, contextual, and interpretative* approach. The emphasis that the latter places on a commitment to constructivist epistemologies and a representation of reality from a subjective point of view was relevant to this research and its purpose. In theoretical terms it permits the emergence of concepts from data rather than their imposition on the basis of a *a priori* theory (Henwood and Pidgeon, in Hammersley 1993:19). Externally imposed 'objective' systems of meaning tend to be rejected. Naturalism and the interpretative approach also draws on other related perspectives, including Weber's *verstehen*, *phenomenology*, *ethnomethodology* and *symbolic interactionism*.

The link with Weber's concept of *verstehen* is clear; and it is this type of 'understanding' that is integral to the method of interpretative sociology (Albrow 1990:3). It is an historical method 'because meanings are generated over time' (ibid:3). Barry Smart identified the historical perspective as the basis of the difference between hermeneutics and *phenomenology*:

'Whereas within phenomenology human beings have been conceptualized as meaning-giving subjects and thus priority has been accorded to subjectivity as the *locus* or origin of meaning, with hermeneutics the analytic emphasis remains with *meaning* but its location is in *socio-historical and cultural practices* and texts' (Smart 1985:16, emphasis added).

But there are common features between these and the other approaches within an interpretative framework.

One of the foremost proponents of a phenomenological position, Alfred Schutz, has written of the subjective nature of 'interpretive understanding' (Schutz 1980:31), and suggested that social science is involved in creating 'second order constructs' of social actors' understanding of social reality (Bryman 1988:52). This is similar to Garfinkel's *ethnomethodology*, concerning the way in which people make sense of the social world (Bryman ibid:53), and the *symbolic interactionist* view of social life as an 'unfolding process in which the individual interprets his or her environment and acts on the basis of that interpretation' (ibid:54). Within symbolic interactionism the process of interaction is one of continuous 'mutual

interpretations of the nature of the situation' (ibid:54); meanings can be constructed and reconstructed.

Herbert Blumer is seen as the pioneer of this symbolic interactionist, interpretive, sociology (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983); Blumer having been a student of G. H. Mead, who had also been an influence on Goffman (Farr in Chapman and Gale 1982:295) as well as Glaser and Strauss (Strauss 1987). For Mead, meaning was to be found in interaction between people, and in the response of the 'observing other' (Farr 1987:13). The notion of 'assuming the role of the other' was central to his theory (ibid:12), and together with the features of verstehen, phenomenology and ethnomethodology mentioned above, has close parallels with Giddens' *double hermeneutic* - a concept that in turn bears a close similarity with Schutz's 'second order constructs'. Giddens defines the double hermeneutic as:

'getting to know what actors already know, and have to know, to "go on" in the daily activities of social life' (Giddens 1984:284).

This is necessary because the sociologist is studying phenomena that are 'already constituted as meaningful' (ibid:284), which was clearly true of 'home' and 'work'. A double process of translation or interpretation is necessary, the task being one of 'mediating the frames of meaning within which actors orient their conduct' (ibid:284).

From a methodological point of view an approach that provides access to meanings underlying social actors' behaviour is

indicated. In this way it may be possible to understand how those studied interpret the world (Hammersley and Atkinson:7). Where data is gathered from interviews or open-ended questions, as was the case here, the meanings being interpreted are carried by the words used and are constructed through common usage; 'associations are derived from meanings we have come to associate with this word over the years' (Strauss and Corbin 1990:81). Furthermore, 'meaning is never fixed and stable' (Donald and Hall 1986:13). Schutz saw words as 'signs' of their own meanings; and from a symbolic interactionist perspective, Cooley wrote:

'A word is a vehicle, a boat floating down from the past, laden with the thoughts of men we never saw; and in coming to understand it we enter into the minds not only of our contemporaries, but into the general mind of humanity continuous through time. Such words, for instance, as good, night, truth, long, home ... are powerful makers of what they stand for' (Cooley 1902:69).

But there is no critical edge to this acknowledgement. In his *methodology of interpretation*, J. B. Thompson took the hermeneutic approach a stage further; he combined what he called *depth hermeneutics* with a *critical intent* (J. B. Thompson 1990:23). The point has already been made that hermeneutics draws attention to what Thompson calls the *hermeneutical conditions of social-historical inquiry*. The object domain is not just observable phenomena; it is also a subject domain of people interpreting and making sense of their own and others'

actions. For this reason the object domain is pre-interpreted, so the task is to re-interpret the pre-interpreted; which seems to be yet another version of what Giddens called the double hermeneutic.

Thompson's proposed methodology of interpretation involves three principal phases: **social historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis** and finally **interpretation**. Within this broad framework, chapter 2 can be seen to have provided a **social historical analysis**, and chapter 3 an approximation to an initial **formal/discursive analysis** (in terms of symbols, representations and meanings). The final, **interpretative**, stage of analysis is concerned with:

'the creative explication of possible meaning ... It uses historical analysis and formal or discursive analysis to shed light on the social conditions and structural features of a symbolic form, and it seeks to interpret a symbolic form in this light, to explicate what it says, what it represents, what it is about' (Thompson *ibid*:22).

In this way these three phases constitute a 'depth hermeneutical framework', with theoretical and conceptual interpretation as the final stage.

Thompson's methodology included the added dimension of a 'critical intent' (*ibid*:23). He sees his methodology of interpretation as relevant to addressing the analysis of ideology and modern culture; ideology in terms of power and, following

Geertz, culture in terms of 'the symbolic character of social life, (and) the patterns of meaning embodied in the symbolic forms exchanged in social interaction' (Thompson 1990:12). Such a methodology would seem equally appropriate, therefore, for the analysis of ideology, as a set of representations, in one of its most powerful forms - the taken-for-granted, the unquestioned, the 'common sense'. The critical approach is necessary to question the unquestioned; the way in which meanings create and/or perpetuate certain '*relations of domination*'. Giddens has made the point that the naturalistic approach on its own may not include this critical edge:

'for sociologists writing in the naturalistic traditions, the question of the connection of social science to common sense appears relatively unproblematic' (Giddens 1987:58).

Bauman traced 'sociology's failure to come to grips with what is truly novel in the society of today' to a conceptual system that is 'hardly ever seriously questioned' (Bauman, in Held and Thompson 1989:54-55). It is for this reason that he later advocated an intellectual shift away from the role of 'legislator' (of standards and truths) towards one of 'interpreter' (Bauman 1992:10-11). It is within an interpretative sociology, and in the spirit of Weber, that 'ideas have to be pursued beyond their limits in existing thought' (Albrow op cit:3, quoted in chapter 3), which was the point of this research. Marcuse and Habermas, also quoted in chapter 3, made the same point.



### 3. Grounded Theory

The assumption that 'all of the concepts pertaining to a given phenomenon have not yet been identified, at least not in this population or place', or that 'someone has never asked this particular research question in quite the same way' (Strauss and Corbin 1990:37) underpins the grounded theory approach, which includes theoretical sampling as well as the 'back and forth' process referred to earlier.

Grounded theory aims to break through existing assumptions and to 'free researchers in sociology from the theoretical strait-jackets of a few "grand theories"' (Henwood and Pidgeon op cit:20). It has close links with the interpretative approach. Analysis, according to Strauss, is 'synonymous with interpretation of data' (Strauss 1987:4); developing theory involves 'placing interpretation on data' (Strauss and Corbin op cit:29) - and interpretation, for Bryman, is the keynote of qualitative research (Bryman 1988:91). It occurs at different levels of 'explicitness, abstraction, and systematization' (ibid:4), and is not unproblematic, but should always be driven by theoretical concerns.

The 'methodological thrust' of the grounded theory approach, first proposed by Glaser and Strauss, is specifically towards the development of theory (Strauss 1987:5). Theory is developed 'in intimate relationships with data' (ibid:6) - and is in this way 'grounded' in the data. This is where the phrase 'back and forth' comes in; it is not a neat unidirectional process, but may

be ragged, faltering and partial, as was the case here. Theories and concepts may be modified as a consequence of a 'running theoretical discussion' which gradually defines conceptual categories, their properties and implications for theory. It is assumed that, as far as the researcher is concerned, this means an active quasi-participant role.

Strauss pointed out that theories have to be conceived, elaborated and then checked out. He preferred to use the terms *induction*, *deduction* and *verification*. Induction involves 'insights, hunches, generative questions' (the basis of the provisional hypothesis) and where they come from. Strauss suggested they come from:

'experience with this kind of phenomenon before - whether the experience is personal or derives more "professionally" from actual exploratory research into the phenomenon or from a previous research program, or from theoretical sensitivity because of the researcher's knowledge of technical literature' (Strauss 1987:12).

The angle taken in this research was a consequence of previous research into the Bed and Breakfast business (Randall 1984), research in a school of architecture, and teaching on sociology of work courses - all of which indicated that 'home' as a concept had been neglected. There was also the personal experience of working from home.

Induction is followed by deduction which 'rests not merely on the

ability to think logically but with experience in thinking about the particular kind of data under scrutiny' (ibid:12). Implications are drawn from the initial hypothesis, implications that can be checked out at the stage of verification. At this final stage the knowledge drawn on is again 'based on personal and professional experience' (ibid:13).

Strauss believed that 'the crucial role of experience has been underplayed by philosophers of science'; that whereas a methodologically reflective approach is accepted, there is a fear of 'subjectivity' (ibid:13). And yet Albrow, writing of Weber, observed that,

'Continuity between life and work, between biography and theory, may be regarded as the defining characteristic of the intellectual as a type of social character' (Albrow 1990:109).

Glaser and Strauss had emphasised the need for personal involvement in the research process, and the need for theoretical sensitivity, 'so that (the researcher) can conceptualize and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data' (Glaser and Strauss op cit:46). They identified two qualities necessary for this: one was a particular 'personal and temperamental bent'; the other 'an ability to have theoretical insight', together with an ability to do something with that insight (ibid:46). Similarly Strauss and Corbin described an attribute that closely resembled C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination when they referred to the creativity necessary to 'break through assumptions and to

create new order out of the old'; for this to happen it is necessary to 'let the mind wander' to make new associations and identify new questions (Strauss and Corbin 1990:27). Discoveries, they suggested, may be the result of flashes of 'intuition', or 'major breakthroughs in understanding the meanings and patterns of events' (ibid:28).

Strauss and Corbin identified the sources of theoretical sensitivity as: first, a good grounding in the technical literature, in addition to personal and professional experience; second, the continual interaction with the data (ibid:46-47). More specifically they pointed to the need to *step back* every so often, to reflect on what is happening, and where it is going, and to maintain an attitude of scepticism.

Strauss stated that grounded theory 'is not really a specific method or technique. It is a style of doing qualitative analysis' (Strauss 1987:5). But he continued:

'(it) includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and certain methodological guidelines, such as the making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density' (ibid:5).

As a 'style of doing qualitative analysis', one that emphasises the importance of theory, it is particularly useful. But it has sometimes sounded very prescriptive, and this aspect has come in for criticism. Hammersley and Atkinson concluded that grounded theorizing was an 'over-reaction to positivism' (Hammersley and

Atkinson 1983:22). Bryman believed that both grounded theory and analytic induction:

'have provided qualitative researchers with possible frameworks for attending to theoretical issues, but that these approaches to theory are often honoured more in the breach than in the observance' (Bryman op cit:91).

If followed to the letter, as a research method, grounded theorizing is likely to be very time consuming, involving 'innumerable stages of analysis each requiring complicated procedures, memos and diagrams' (Bulos and Farish 1993:12). Bulos and Farish concluded that it is perhaps a method best left to the well resourced researcher only.

But, despite these reservations, an approach that broadly encompassed the essential characteristics of theoretical sampling, a methodology of interpretation and grounded theory was felt to be the most appropriate way to proceed. This would combine features of three different approaches to analysis identified by Tesch, and quoted in Bryman and Burgess (ibid:6): those based on language and how language is used; the interpretive approach with its focus on 'culture from the point of view of those being researched' (which includes ethnography); and theory-building approaches (such as grounded theory). The interview was the obvious choice for gathering data that would meet the demands of this qualitative approach.

## Interviews - methodological considerations

### 1. Type of interview

Interviews described variously as non-standardised, unstructured, or focused are likely to be made up of an 'interview guide' (Fielding 1993:136) or a 'list of issues to be covered' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:113). They are ideal 'strategies for discovery' (Fielding *ibid*:136), especially at an exploratory or investigative stage, so fit in with the broad parameters of both ethnography and grounded theory. From an ethnographic point of view Hammersley and Atkinson advocated non-directive open-ended questions - as triggers that would encourage the interviewee to talk about a specific topic.

An interviewer using this approach may appear to be passive, but is actively involved at all times. In practical and theoretical terms, active listening is essential to the effectiveness of this approach,

'he or she must listen to what is being said in order to assess how it relates to the research focus and how it may reflect the circumstances of the interview' (Hammersley and Atkinson *ibid*:113).

Hammersley and Atkinson have pointed to its role in directing the subsequent course of the interview. The skills of active listening are essential to effective probing, and are much the same as those required for counselling (see, for example, Nelson-Jones 1988). An interviewer should display 'interest without appearing intrusive' (Fielding *op cit*:139). Strategies can include: an expectant glance; 'mm', or 'yes', followed by an

expectant silence; 'what else?'; 'what other reason?'; 'please tell me more about that'; 'I'm interested in all your reasons' (Fielding op cit:141). The aim is to keep the influence of the researcher to a minimum, while at the same time obtaining as full a response as possible. Fielding quoted Merton (Merton and Kendall, 1946) as having made three points in this context: guidance and direction from the interviewer should be at a minimum; the subject's definition of the situation should be given full expression; the interview should bring out the 'value-laden implications of the response' (Fielding op cit:147-148).

This type of unstructured interview may be used at a pilot stage, as was the case here; its flexibility is ideal for this purpose,

'to gather basic information about the field before imposing more precise, and inflexible methods ...

Such interviews use a very broad topic guide with as few direct questions as possible' (Fielding ibid:137)

But there are problems specific to unstructured interviews, as Mason has described, precisely because the flexibility allows for little control of focus, wording, and question order; Burgess suggested that there is therefore a need for constant monitoring in terms of 'direction, depth, and detail of the interview, the topics to include and topics to avoid, together with question order' (Burgess 1984:120). He concluded that there should be careful planning of topics to be covered and time allowed; one and a half hours was the optimum duration (ibid:120).

Unstructured interviews may be ideal in theory, therefore, but may not always be the best choice for parts of qualitative research. Even within ethnography, a non-directive style is not always the preferred choice: Hammersley and Atkinson have expanded on this:

'Often one may wish to test out hypotheses arising from the developing theory and here quite directive and specific questions may be required' (Hammersley and Atkinson op cit:114).

Fielding similarly acknowledged the usefulness of standardised interviews - in which the wording and order of questions are the same - with certain provisos:

'Standardised interviews are suitable when you already have some idea of what is happening with your sample in relation to the research topic, and where there is no danger of loss of meaning as a result of imposing a standard way of asking questions' (op cit:136).

Between the standardised and non-standardised interview is the semi-standardised interview, when certain questions are asked in the same way, but the order may be altered and the interviewer free to probe as necessary. This describes the approach taken in the main interviews reported here, following the non-standardised (unstructured or focused) pilot interviews. Meaning would be a priority, but it was not felt to be jeopardised by the use of the semi-standardised interview.

Whichever type of interview is chosen, the interviewer is, as already implied, an active participant in the interaction. This



has been emphasised within ethnography and symbolic interactionism, and particularly in relation to the concept of reflexivity.

## 2. Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity is most closely associated with Hammersley and Atkinson's ethnography; and is based on the assertion that 'All social research is founded on the human capacity for participant observation' (Hammersley and Atkinson op cit:25). Social research, *whatever the methodology*, involves participating in the social world, and reflecting on the consequences of that participation; this is true, that is, whether the approach taken is essentially positivist or naturalist. All methods are 'merely refinements or developments of (methods) used in everyday life' (ibid:15). An interview is therefore a 'structured conversation'.

An ethnographic approach is distinctive in that it not only acknowledges this but sees it as an asset in terms of developing and testing theory, which is - as for grounded theory - the ultimate aim. Hammersley and Atkinson rejected positivism's search for universal laws and the 'fly on the wall' attitude; and naturalism's focus on cultural description, and belief in 'full participation' (Ibid:18). They equally rejected the separation both assume between science and common sense (ibid:14); researchers, as participants in the social world, 'derive hypotheses from (their) cultural knowledge' and test these out against further information (ibid:16). According to Hammersley

and Atkinson, it is necessary for researchers to appreciate that their beliefs are, like all beliefs, 'structured by social processes', and in this way 'take care not to become straitjacketed by the beliefs that are typical of the social circles in which they move' (ibid:21).

What is at issue here is the relationship between the knower and the known, and the realization that the quality of research does not depend on eliminating the effects of the researcher (ibid:17) or eradicating observer bias (Henwood and Pidgeon op cit:22); but it does depend on understanding these processes so that they do not obstruct the generation of concepts. On the other hand, reflexivity is, according to Henwood and Pidgeon, one of the criteria by which the quality of research can be judged. Unlike Hammersley and Atkinson, they concluded that the naturalistic paradigm **does** challenge the 'dualistic distinction' between knower and known and 'acknowledges the ways in which research activity *inevitably* shapes and constitutes the object of inquiry' (ibid:24). They were equally concerned that researchers should be free of 'theoretical straitjackets'.

The link between research as participant observation, and the relationship between the knower and the known, has been examined, from a social psychological point of view, by Robert Farr, specifically in relation to the interview (Farr, in Chapman and Gale 1982). Farr pointed out that in an interview the researcher needs to observe, listen and question; it was Becker and Geer (1957) who associated these qualities with those of

participant observation. And it was the 'scientific', positivist, approach that epitomised the legacy of the nineteenth century that resulted in what Farr saw as the 'demise of the interview'. His emphasis on meaning, and therefore also on language, reflected the high regard in which he held the work of G. H. Mead, for whom the mind was a product of language, and therefore inherently social.

Mead's notion of 'assuming the role of the other' (Farr *ibid*:12) had implications for the relationship between the knower and the known, the observer and the observed. It is a relationship that has recently been given far greater attention, even in the natural sciences, and this is significant if it is true that,

'most of the major scientific revolutions, in recent centuries, have involved a shift in perspective in the relationship between knower and known' (Farr *ibid*:12).

It was Einstein who pointed out that what is 'seen', and taken as knowledge, is only ever a function of the space/time from which the observation is made. Mead had been influenced by Einstein, and also by Dewey (Farr *ibid*:10), who had refuted the 'spectator' theory of knowledge, again giving the 'knower' an active role (Bullock and Woodings 1983:179-180). In Goffman's terms, both interviewer and interviewee are 'on stage', and in a 'reactive' situation (Farr 1982 *op cit*:289-291). Goffman (1959) had also suggested that 'Many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interaction, or lie concealed within it', which may be seen as particularly true of the interview (Farr *ibid*:295).

With the aim being not only to go beyond the time and place of the interaction, but also beyond what those interviewed 'already know' (Giddens op cit), it is likely to be an advantage to have the basis of the 'shared culture' discussed by Farr - and to be aware that this is so. Hammersley and Atkinson referred to the 'cultural knowledge' from which hypotheses derive, to be checked out against further data. This was true of the research situation reported here; as someone who worked from home I could be said to have a shared culture with the interviewees. Furthermore at the pilot stage, I was known to those interviewed, who also knew that I worked from home. The situation was slightly different for the main interviews, where interviewees and researcher alike were members of an organisation for people who worked from home, but were not previously known to one another; there was again a shared culture and status, however.

### 3. Transcription

The purpose of the transcription of interviews is to generate useable data that provides a valid representation of what was said by those interviewed. It has an important role in the overall research, therefore.

Like the interview process itself, the process of transcription may seem to be passive - and in this case even mechanical - but should be seen as an active part of the analytical process. If used constructively, it can contribute considerably to interpretation and analysis. Strauss and Corbin made the connection when they wrote: 'Listening as well as transcribing

is essential for full and varied analysis' (op cit:31). But they suggested that the researcher should transcribe 'only as much as is needed' (ibid:30), and that,

'the actual transcribing (which can involve considerable time, energy, and money) should be **selective**' (ibid:30).

Their guidelines however emphasised the need to keep in mind the purpose of the study, and the relevance of the interview material to theoretical sensitivity, and therefore to subsequent analysis. So although they also discussed the possibility of paying someone else to transcribe interviews, they emphasised the importance of listening to the tapes. And ultimately, they suggested, it was better to transcribe more rather than less (ibid:31).

Fielding has considered the options and provided more specific guidelines. On the subject of verbatim transcriptions, he warned that, 'You may not know what will be the most significant points of analysis when you are doing the transcription' (ibid:146), and this was felt to be an important consideration in the research reported here. Data that may subsequently turn out to be significant is not lost, and the argument for verbatim transcription, by the researcher personally, would seem to be a strong one, and was followed here. Fielding suggested that if the sample size was 20 or less, as was the case here, this should certainly be the case. The 'sophisticated technologies' he described are probably not available to many researchers, and were not available in this case, so the process will inevitably be laborious and time-consuming. Advantages are nevertheless

likely to outweigh disadvantages. As Fielding advised, it is always worth researchers transcribing all the interviews themselves if possible, because 'you have ideas as you transcribe' (ibid:147), and the process encourages familiarity with the data. This was found to be very true, as reported later. It could be added that the way in which the words are spoken may be important too, so although printing out a 'hard copy' of the interview transcripts is essential for careful and repeated inspection, hearing again the voices and the words is a valuable dimension. The aim is to stay close to the data.

#### 4. Rigor/creativity balance

All these considerations are designed, in Corbin and Strauss's words, 'to give the analytic process precision and rigor'; at the same time making provision for the essential element of creativity (Corbin and Strauss op cit:31). This balance is important throughout the research process, is implicit in the 'back and forth' style, and can begin at the earliest stages, particularly during transcription. This is why Corbin and Strauss suggest that the first interviews should be transcribed and analyzed before continuing with other interviews (ibid:30). The categorizing, labelling, or 'open-coding' that they advocate at this stage represents the early stages of conceptualizing, by which they mean:

'taking apart an observation, a sentence, a paragraph, and giving each discrete incident, idea, or event, a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon' (ibid:63).

As to how precisely this is done, they continue:

'We ask questions about each one, like: What is this? What does it represent? We compare incident with incident as we go along so that similar phenomena can be given the same name. Otherwise, we would wind up with too many names and very confused!' (ibid:63).

Corbin and Strauss have identified three sources of category names: the researcher, and what seems logical to the researcher; the 'pool of concepts' with which the researcher is familiar from relevant literature; words used by the informants or interviewees themselves (ibid:67-69). The more specific procedures - 'analysis of a single word, phrase, or sentence; the flip-flop procedure; the making of comparisons' (Ibid:95) - can all take place in a more provisional sense at this early stage.

This early labelling process has been called *open-coding* (Glaser and Strauss:106-107; Corbin and Strauss:62-63), but it can also be viewed as a search for *themes*, which is the term used by Jennifer Mason (1994:91). She found this to be 'a good way of starting to get to grips with qualitative data systematically' (ibid:91). The themes were used by Mason to guide further data gathering (ibid:92), in the same way that the themes arising from the analysis of the pilot interviews in this case guided the design of the main interviews and the questionnaires.

Mason also addressed the question of the contribution computers can make to qualitative analysis. Programs such as Ethnograph are 'designed to meet the data management needs of qualitative

social scientists' (Ethnograph information/specifications). A program like this can perhaps offer a more 'scientific' analysis, but as the specifications state, in essence it 'takes over the "cut and paste" procedures'; and it 'does not think or analyze for you'. It cannot, that is, interpret meanings. On a more technical level, it would require transcripts to be in a specific format, which would be both complicated and time-consuming to achieve. It was not used for this research for all these reasons. Mason cautioned researchers to be 'circumspect about the role that computers can play in the process of qualitative analysis and data integration'; she explained this further:

'computers cannot perform the creative and intellectual task of devising categories, or of deciding which categories or types of data are relevant to the process being investigated' (ibid:108).

Recognizing the limitations of computers in this way is, according to Mason, as important as acknowledging their benefits; and one might add that not to do so, and/or to use them merely because they are there might be equivalent to succumbing to another form of technological determinism. For this research Minitab was initially used to analyze part of the postal survey data, but the results were rejected as having lost too much in the way of qualitative value or meaning.

If the creative element is valued, it does not imply a neglect of rigor or of validity. It has been suggested that data gathering could become more focused as concepts become more



clearly identified as being relevant. There was also the question of verification (the third stage of Strauss's grounded theorising), which can run in parallel with this. Interview data has its limitations, not least because samples tend to be small as was the case here. It was with these factors in mind that the main interviews were followed by a postal survey; the questionnaires being made up of predominantly open-ended questions.

First, however, it was necessary to undertake a pilot survey, using unstructured interviews that would allow the interviewees free expression, and indicate themes to be followed up. This is described in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### PILOT INTERVIEWS AND EMERGING THEMES

The pilot survey represented the first, exploratory, stage in the data gathering and analysis. It was not carried out in isolation from theoretical issues in that there was a continuous and interactive process of data gathering and theoretical research; a process Glaser and Strauss described as 'back and forth', discussed in the previous chapter. Analysis of the pilot interviews identified themes which guided the content of the main interviews which followed; while it also suggested how, and to what extent, they should be structured.

#### Pilot Interviews

##### The Sample

The sample for the pilot interviews was chosen for both practical and theoretical reasons. First, the people interviewed were known to be using their home as their place of work, and to be self-employed or freelance, rather than either 'homeworkers' or 'teleworkers' (and therefore probably employed); second, their work provided essential income; third, they were geographically accessible, in the Chichester area. They were all known to me.

The six people who made up the pilot sample were:

- (1) A private caterer (weddings etc. plus standing orders to shops), who employed two other women part-time; female aged 40,

with husband and two teenage boys at home. The house was a large, four-bedroomed traditional style family house on a private estate.

(2) The proprietor and joint principal - with wife - of a private theatre school; male in late forties, with wife and adult step-son at home. The house was a very large traditional town house, divided into living areas, school and two let rooms.

(3) The partner (administration, accounts, etc.) in a surgical appliance business, run with husband; female in early fifties, sharing home with husband, adult children having left. The house was a traditional, four bed-roomed country house.

(4) A graphic artist (in partnership with his wife, who ran the administrative, accounts and PR side of the business, and was also present at the interview); male in his late thirties, two young school-age children. The house was a traditional detached family house.

(5) An editor, who also did some catering for a large organisation; in her forties, no children, husband early retired doing some craft work at home. The house was a four bed-roomed traditional style house in a quiet residential estate.

(6) Translator (English/French) of books etc., some quite technical. In her forties, with two teenage girls and husband who also ran a business from home. The house was an old stone-

built cottage, with four bed-rooms, in a village of similarly traditional country houses.

### Type of Interview

In terms of the development of concepts, this stage of the research was exploratory, although a certain framework of areas to be covered had been established from previous research and knowledge of relevant literature and theory. At this stage the main focus would be on how those interviewed experienced working from home, and what did 'home' and 'work' mean to them? But there needed to be flexibility so that data could be gathered from quite a wide range of areas, with a view to selecting those most relevant for the main interviews. The more practical and technical areas to be found in much of the earlier research literature were included; areas such as legislation, overheads and the use of technology. An open mind on their importance seemed appropriate at that stage.

For all these reasons unstructured interviews were used for the pilot: a 'broad topic guide' with 'as few direct questions as possible' (Fielding op cit:137). Interviewees were to determine the direction the interviews would take.

The specific areas covered were:

- \* the 'career' of the person, i.e. how did they come to be working at home, and was it a matter of choice?
- \* 'home' - what did it mean to them?

- \* 'work' and 'serious work' - what did it mean to them?
- \* advantages and disadvantages of working at home (flexibility relevant?)
- \* how did they use time (clear boundaries or not)?
- \* how did they use space (clear boundaries or not)?
- \* how did they cope with the need for credibility - or whatever terms they used? For example, did they indicate qualifications, try to make address sound as though it were not their home?
- \* how did they cope with someone coming to the door - what was the other person's reaction to them being at home; what was their response to the situation (i.e. one in which they were working)?
- \* overheads, insurance, pensions, etc.
- \* pay - was it the market rate for the work?
- \* planning regulations - were these a problem?
- \* how much technology used in the house?

Questions were asked in an open-ended form as far as possible, in a manner that made use of 'active listening' skills. The interviews were tape-recorded, after clearing this with the interviewees, and lasted about one and a half hours.

#### Interviewer as participant observer - reflexivity

The form the pilot interviews took reflected the quality of a 'structured conversation' in a participant observation. I was known to the interviewees, but only as an acquaintance, and had not previously discussed the issues raised in the interviews

other than in passing. I presented myself as neither 'expert' nor 'spectator'; the nature of the interaction was nevertheless influenced by the fact that we shared a common culture and status because we worked in the same way. In terms of reflexivity, I was aware of what I brought with me in the way of knowledge and experience, and that I would - as anyone would - influence the interaction. It was with this understanding that it was hoped to get the interviewees to talk freely in response to predominantly open-ended questions. The interviews took place in the homes of the subjects; there was a relaxed atmosphere in all cases, and no apparent concern about being tape-recorded.

### Transcription

This stage was again acknowledged as being an active part of the research, and an initial stage of analysis. An ordinary tape-recorder had been used, making transcription fairly tedious; but after an initial attempt to select out relevant sections to be transcribed verbatim, it was quickly decided that verbatim transcriptions of the interviews was necessary. It was not immediately obvious which sections could be omitted and which might subsequently prove relevant, although carrying out the transcriptions as quickly as possible - between actual interviews was found to be helpful.

It was also apparent that despite 'active', or attentive, listening, some of the words of the interviewees were heard, as if for the first time, when transcribing. This confirmed the benefit of transcribing personally, and in total; also the

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importance of hearing the manner in which something was said, which might not be obvious from the written word.

Finally, having ideas during the transcription process was a way in which a provisional analysis began to take place, being part of the continuous 'back and forth' between data and theory that would occur throughout the research.

### The search for themes

The back and forth quality of analysis was particularly important here; this was not a separate process but continuous, and contiguous with transcribing in the first place.

The categorising and labelling process that has been called open-coding (Glaser and Strauss op cit; Corbin and Strauss op cit) should move towards conceptualization; and as Corbin and Strauss suggested, the concepts arose from: what appeared to be logical in response to the question 'what does this represent?'; my own knowledge of previous research and literature (and what was, therefore, likely to be relevant); and particularly from the words used by those interviewed. At this early stage, the idea of identifying themes that might guide further data gathering was found to be the most useful (Mason op cit: 91-92).

In practical terms, it meant taking notes from the full transcripts, onto cards, and then from these cards a list of topics was assembled, in order to identify possible themes. The list was subjected to further scrutiny, in conjunction with



theoretical background, to see which themes emerged as the most prominent and relevant. The three that arose in this way were checked back against the original transcripts, and put into theoretical context.

## **Emerging Themes**

### **1. Flexibility and Autonomy**

At the time the pilots were carried out, there was much literature on 'flexible specialisation', 'flexible workforce', 'flexible firm' and 'flexible rostering', to name but a few. Of these, 'flexible workforce' has featured prominently in recent political rhetoric. Despite the confusions and ambiguities, the term emerged from the interviews as a significant theme, being seen almost as a defining characteristic of working from home. It has become a catch-all term, but the contradictory ways in which it can be used were evident. It was the notion of flexibility - if not always the exact word - that interviewees tended to cite when discussing the advantages of home-based work, but it was also revealed as a concept that described some of the disadvantages.

In the first place, it was the ability to offer flexibility to potential clients that was seen as an advantage in getting contracts; it was what they could offer over and above what a conventional business could offer. In terms of their market situation, it was seen as an advantage. The graphic artist, for example, believed that he was asked to do work because he was able to work flexibly, and would work evenings, weekends,

whatever was necessary. Reflecting the words of the caterer who found that 'people phone me up on Sundays and all sorts of things', he was 'expected to be there when needed'. He also noted that although he might have to give up his 'free time', when he employed staff they could not be expected to. This was one of the reasons he wanted to keep the business small. The editor similarly found that when she had a job to do, under some pressure, she would 'cut off' - from other demands - and concentrate almost solely on the work during that time. She would later 'switch off' again from work. So she would 'take it as it comes', responding to demand.

More frequently the advantage of flexibility from their own point of view was mentioned, in terms of control over how time was used. Within this sample it seemed to have slightly different associations, however, for two of the women compared with the two men. The women used the term in connection with 'combining' household and work activities, for example being able to put the washing into the washing machine during a break in work; it seemed that as the domestic work had to be done, it was useful to be able to fit it in with work in this way, and not have it left until the evening or weekend. Similar comments were made by the women in connection with family commitments, the caterer being the most positive in these terms; she felt she was there when needed by her two sons, which she made a priority.

In general, considerable value was attached to being able to work when one chose, again implying a degree of *autonomy* in relation

to the use of time. The translator found that,

'the advantages are your time's your own and if you want to work in the evening rather than in the daytime you can - and that's the most important advantage'.

But she added that 'for a woman, whose hours are fairly fully taken up anyway with the family, the advantages are tremendous.'

It was the two men who specifically mentioned that they liked being able to combine work with other valued activities such as seeing the children, walking the dog, walking round the garden or listening to the news at mid-day. The owner of the school said he enjoyed the 'variety' in his day, which included buying and selling paintings. He thought that it would be terrible 'going to an office, knowing what you're going to do, plodding home'; the pleasure he felt in his relative freedom was evident throughout the interview. He referred to the 'satisfaction' which was to be had from being self-employed, and that 'the work is IT'. The partner in the surgical appliance business, who had frequently worked late into the evening, similarly referred to how 'satisfying' it was to build something up from scratch; the editor said she liked 'doing my own thing - I'm independent'; and the woman with the catering business, after saying that she enjoyed what she did, added by way of explanation, 'it's mine'. She was at a point where she had the option of expanding further, which her banker husband was keen she should.

On the other hand, because it was sometimes necessary to work in the evenings or at weekends, the graphic artist said he would rather be at home at these times. He and his wife had tried

renting business premises away from home, but he 'hated' having to be there at weekends, especially as he could not take the kind of breaks he appreciated. He and his wife started off trying to keep to a nine to five routine, following a conventional pattern, but 'discovered that this wasn't the way we wanted to operate'. His wife explained,

'he is always going to have to put in funny hours, wherever we are, and so whereas we thought "this is it", and we'd work more of a nine to five, five day week, it hasn't worked like that. And particularly in the winter time it's probably much better for him if he could just pop into the studio and do 3 hours, on a wet Sunday afternoon.'

Again, value was attached to this kind of control over the way his time could be used, fitting work in with family and weather - once they had adjusted to not feeling bound to a nine to five working day.

When it came to the disadvantages of working flexibly these were almost a mirror image of the advantages, being to do with a lack of control. The translator found that 'you're never free of it (work)'. The caterer found much the same, that 'you never really get away from it', and that not being bound to nine to five could easily mean working more hours than this. And whereas being assumed to be 'available' at all hours may be seen as an advantage by potential clients, the disadvantages to the person supplying the service were manifest.

This unpredictability of work created a further problem, that of 'controlling the work flow' or 'getting the workload right', as two interviewees put it; their situation was inherently reactive, rather than proactive. This in turn contributed to their vulnerability. As the school proprietor said, 'you have to be flexible and you have to be prepared to take the risks'. The graphic artist associated this problem with 'the need to think of the long term', with the need to take out insurance and pension policies. For the translator, whose husband also worked independently, the feeling of insecurity was with her 'all the time'. This was mainly because some of his business ventures had failed, so it was incumbent on her to provide a steady income for the household.

Overall, the question of flexibility involved a tension between two opposites: control - and autonomy - or lack of it. In Giddens' discussion of the modern organisation, autonomy could be seen as the opposite of the surveillance that typifies the organisation (Giddens 1987:Ch 6). In his 'class schema', Goldthorpe (1980) identified Class I according to their high, secure income combined with 'autonomy and freedom of control by others'. But Class IV, which included the self-employed apart from the higher professionals, and could experience 'severe market constraints, nevertheless also had,

'some amount of capital; and also of a high degree of autonomy, in the sense of freedom from direct supervision, in the performance of their work-tasks' (Goldthorpe 1980:40-41).

The people in this sample had autonomy in these terms - they were their own bosses, and were not subject to surveillance. They could, for example, choose how they used their time, and adapt to the situation. They valued this type of independence and the quality of life it afforded; their work situation, that is, had many advantages, including the feeling that the results were their own.

In 1986 Angela Dale had cautioned, however, against assuming that those classified as self-employed either owned 'the means of (their own) production' or experienced 'self direction or autonomy within the work process'; these two factors being the defining characteristics of the 'ideal-typical' self-employed (Dale 1986:430). There was evidence that homeworkers were likely to be mis-classified in this way. Catherine Hakim (1987) referred to the 'ideology of self-employment, with its emphasis on independence, flexibility, choice and freedom' (in other words, autonomy), which 'is strongly voiced by home-based workers, including those - such as manufacturing homeworkers - doing relatively low-paid work' (Hakim 1987:559). Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) found a 'myth of autonomy' in relation to homeworkers. But this serves only to reinforce the distinction between homeworkers and the group interviewed here, who owned their means of production and had a degree of self-direction or autonomy over the way they worked. They had more in common with Bogenhold and Staber's first group which included those, 'such as self-employed farmers, craftspersons and independent professionals who own their means of

production and control their labour process but whose incomes and life changes are largely determined by anonymous market forces.'

They can be compared with the second group,

'such as certain kinds of freelancers and homeworkers, who have no autonomy in the labour process and may not even own their means of production' (Bogenhold and Staber 1991:225).

But, like Bogenhold and Staber's first group, the group studied here were subject to market forces; and the link between *flexible* working and vulnerability has been well established (Yeandle 1982:427; Garnsey 1979:237; West 1982:34; Wood 1981). In this sense there was a lack of control over being seen as available at all hours, and whereas they could offer a flexible and responsive service, they could not control the work flow. Their work was demand led, and their market situation could be weak and precarious.

## 2. Legitimacy

To be strong in the market for work assumes a degree of legitimacy, and this was confirmed as an important issue, with evidence that it was a problem for this group of people. The evidence was to be found in the specific references to the subject, implicit in the words used; also in the indications of image management as a coping strategy. A perceived association with pay and the value attached to time constituted a third strand.

Though not mentioning the word 'legitimacy' as such, the translator said that she considered it important that her work gave her, personally, some 'credibility'. She used the same word to describe the attitude of a woman acquaintance who treated the business she was starting up very 'positively' and 'seriously', which again gave the work 'far greater credibility'. She believed she herself had a 'professional' attitude towards her work, but that ultimately the 'validation' of her work was 'outside' - that she would have to work outside home again for her work to be granted this validation.

The school principal said he and his wife 'have to have incredible respectability', in the eyes not only of parents but also of the neighbours in what was clearly a residential area. The surgical appliance business had the advantage of an association with hospitals, which was thought to provide it with the appropriate 'charisma'. This was probably a crucial factor as the actual manufacture of the appliances was carried out at home and could be noisy at times, but never attracted any complaints. The editor, on the other hand, said she 'would like greater recognition'.

Under the heading of what might broadly be called image management, some sought to increase legitimacy by taking positive and proactive action to present the right impression. The caterer, for example, originally had no paper qualifications, but a great deal of experience. She took an accredited course, in order to have a qualification to show customers, but found that



in the event her work 'increased by reputation'. The graphic artist changed the name of his house so that it sounded less purely residential, and he also used a company name. The reason was 'to project our image outwards' when dealing with the large organisations he did work for. He was apparently trying to maintain an image appropriate to the corporate environment he was familiar with. But again he found that ultimately it was 'trust' that mattered, and 'not where you live'; he also found that this came with being established. The translator referred to taking 'a professional attitude to work', and clearly set herself a high standard. She also explained that it was her voice on the answerphone because her husband thought it was 'more professional' that it should be her voice and not his, and that 'people calling in to what they think is an office tend to act more favourably to a woman's voice.' With the same purpose in mind, the editor would also refer to her 'office', and said she preferred editing work to catering because she found it 'more professional'.

The desire to present the right image - for the work to be seen as legitimate - was, finally, closely associated with an awareness that the fee paid, and the rate for the job, was often lower than it would be if the work was carried out away from home. This seemed to imply that it was not seen as of equal worth. The editor summed up what she believed to be the assumption: 'it's done from home, it's "part-time" - and therefore it's low paid'. She believed that, for example, prices of the same articles would be higher in a shop than at a

craft fair because 'you go into a shop and it's something legitimate'. She thought the fact of going 'over the threshold in the shop' was significant. The translator, who had been told she was charging 'London rates' - because she had calculated this as the realistic rate for her work, which was mainly technical and very complex - was sometimes met by 'a certain antagonism'. She dealt with this by maintaining the 'professional attitude' already mentioned, offering to carry out any corrections free of charge. She had never, in fact, had any work returned for correction.

It seems from these examples that those interviewed believed that they could not take legitimacy for granted, and yet it was essential to their work being recognised, and ultimately to their income. Their comments acknowledged that working from home did not carry the legitimacy of work in an organisation or other recognised 'place of work' outside home.

It was Weber who developed the idea of legitimacy in connection with bureaucracy and authority; every system of authority was seen as attempting 'to establish and to cultivate the belief in its "legitimacy"' (Talcott Parsons, edited translation 1943:325). Giddens' contention that in modern organisations the basis of legitimacy 'is never specified in personal terms', but rather 'authority is perceived as an impersonal set of claims', follows from this. The contrast is with personalized relations of legitimations which are 'closely bound up with circumstances of high presence-availability' (Giddens 1987:164). And although not

necessarily involving physical presence, the relationship between those who work from home and those for whom they work is a personal one relying on personal contact. In being seen as available, often at all hours, they can be said to operate under a system of 'high presence-availability'. Their legitimacy has to be gained on the basis of personal trust and reputation, and the reference to working in a 'professional' manner can be seen in this context.

To have legitimacy is to have the ability to justify; it influences, therefore, material outcomes such as an organisation's or an individual's pull on the market. Giddens has stated that one cannot discuss the process of legitimation in terms of language only, but must relate the 'structures of signification' not only to legitimation but also to domination and power in social life (Giddens 1984:31).

Berger and Luckmann had earlier emphasised a similar point:

'Legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a *normative dignity* to its practical imperatives' (Berger and Luckmann 1966:110 - emphasis added).

Legitimation, they proposed, 'produces new meanings'. In this way a 'symbolic universe' is created, this being 'the matrix of all socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings' (ibid:114 - emphasis added). The influence of this symbolic universe arises, that is, from its potential for being taken for granted and 'objectivated':

'Whereas the establishment of a symbolic universe presupposes theoretical reflection on the part of somebody ... everybody may "inhabit" that universe in a taken-for-granted attitude. If the institutional order is to be taken for granted in its totality as a meaningful whole, it must be legitimated by "placement" in a symbolic universe. But, other things being equal, this universe itself does not require further legitimation' (ibid:122).

This unquestioning taken-for-granted implies power. It would seem that those who work in organisations have their legitimacy ensured in this way to an extent unavailable to those who work from home. For the latter there is no equivalent to the supportive 'symbolic universe' associated with an organisation. In their study of *The Concept of Organisation*, Bradley and Wilkie concluded that:

'The behaviour is not, first of all, observed and then evaluated; our values, in fact, allow us to describe the behaviour' (Bradley and Wilkie 1974:108).

The legitimacy associated with the home seemed to be more to do with respectability than, for example, the corporate language of command and control found within organisations. Nevertheless, attempts were made to introduce the language and symbolism of the corporate setting, with the use of a company name or reference to the 'office' for example.

These strategies appeared to represent an effort to redefine

their circumstances - to 'make sense' of these circumstances to themselves and others, and this is central to legitimation, as Luckmann explains:

'Legitimation, although based on the process of making sense of things in general, is a very specific process of making sense. It conforms with Max Weber's position as well as with ordinary linguistic usage to say that legitimation is making sense of power' (Luckmann 1987:111).

That which 'makes sense of the social world' can be defined as ideology (McLennan 1988:9), which can also be 'systems of representation' (Althusser, in Donald and Hall 1988:14). In the link between legitimation and ideology, Habermas identified a distortion similar to the all-pervasive distortion he believed to be created by science and technology.

Within this conceptual framework, those who work from home can be seen to lack power, partly because they have apparently contravened the 'normative order'. More specifically, they have crossed the ideological boundaries associated with this normative order.

### **3. Boundaries**

The most obvious boundary to have been crossed is the physical or geographical boundary between 'home' and 'work'. Giddens says of this boundary:

'The development of modern capitalism ... brings about

a differentiation between the home and the workplace, this differentiation having considerable implications for the overall organization of production systems and other major institutional features of contemporary societies' (Giddens 1984:122).

Those who are self-employed 'one-person businesses' have, 'cut across the conventional distinction ... between family units where no production for the formal economy takes place and activities which are part of the 'formal economy and carried on almost solely in units especially set up for the purpose' (Curran 1989:13 emphasis added).

It is this ideological boundary - or conventional distinction - that has come to be largely taken for granted, so the most distinctive feature of the situation investigated here was that the boundary did not apply. But there are contributory factors that make the situation more complex.

It is possible in the first place to create a spatial boundary between home and work *within* the home, but the extent to which this was maintained or protected varied considerably amongst the six households. Spatially, there was generally a felt need to keep clear boundaries that identified the work area, and two couples had moved house in order to have a room of their own each for work. On the other hand, it was the maintenance of the 'home' space that three of the women seemed to find very important. The translator, for example, said she 'would like to keep "work" separate' and kept her work in one room, the problem

being that her husband - who also ran a business from home - did not recognise any boundaries but 'works wherever he is, so things are dotted around all over the house'. She did not want her two teenage daughters to 'get the idea that life is **only** work'. The caterer similarly tried to keep part of the home 'for family'; whereas the dining room was full of crates of crockery and baskets of cakes, the sitting room was kept 'clear of anything to do with work'. And finally, the partner in the surgical appliances business found that when, in the early days, employees had to 'come in part-time it was 'an invasion of my home situation', which she could not protect. When she and her husband later moved she had a room at the top of the house, and then 'it (work) was never an intrusion'.

A desire to keep 'home' spatially separate - even protected - from work was evident in these example, but it was not always the case. The school principal, for example, was happy to run an 'open house', and felt that it was 'good to have few boundaries in the school; we wouldn't shut the door any more than you'd shut the door on your family'. It was perhaps significant that he compared with students with 'family'; furthermore he and his wife both came from vicarage backgrounds, and she had had six children while managing a hotel. They were entirely comfortable with a very open arrangement.

The graphic artist and his wife valued their own space, and were one of the couples who moved so that they could have a room for her (administrative and PR) work, and a converted garage for his

studio. She usually made the first contact with clients; and she visited them rather than ask them back to the house. When the children were pre-school age (only a year or two earlier) they went to a childminder when she was working; and this contrasted with the older woman with the surgical appliance business, who had had her young children around her when she worked (they had all left home by the time of the interview). She said 'they wouldn't interrupt me unless it was necessary', but it was clearly difficult at times, and she felt that working the way she did was 'second best'.

As far as time boundaries were concerned, the earlier section on flexibility illustrated that, as with space, both advantages and disadvantages were felt to accompany the breaching of the 'normal' (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) home/work boundaries. As the graphic artist pointed out, however, it was not possible to eliminate situations in which 'work "spills over" into what would normally be family time'. It was noticeable that he and his wife tried to keep to a nine to five routine when he first went independent, but only later realised that there were advantages - for them as well as for clients - if they used the time outside this conventional 'work time', and that the fact that they were not in a conventional work context allowed them to do this.

But expectations were often contradictory. Being 'at home' meant that the boundaries being crossed were essentially ideological; the time/space boundaries were a tangible manifestation of this, and therefore more obvious.



The word 'home', and being 'at home', seemed to carry the assumption of being available - not only to be contacted about work at any hour, as mentioned, but to be available for socializing. The caterer found that 'they just think because I'm at home I don't work', and referring to a specific acquaintance, she felt that she 'just thought it was a hobby - that I used to do just one or two bits and pieces'. This acquaintance was on the same committee, and 'she will call at any time and come in, and she expects me to just stop and do anything she wants, or just discuss anything - but I may be up to ... you know!'

The editor found that 'It got to the stage when I'd go down (to the door) with a notebook or pen in my hand.' This was to counteract callers who might acknowledge she was working but called round nevertheless; 'People can't accept you're at home but working'. She gave an example of what they would say: "Just popping round. I expect you're working but I just wanted to ask you so-and-so". The translator similarly believed that the expectation was "she's there - she's not working out - so she's got time for me". If she explained that she was working, and "you'll excuse me if I don't ask you in because I'm in the middle of something", she found that 'they're quite taken aback, even a little bit offended sometimes - you're at home'. She made the point that her husband was not treated in the same way; the response in his case would be, 'Oh dear, I see you're busy'. The graphic artist's wife again found that friends 'perhaps resented that you weren't always available'. Her husband said it was friends who did not run their own businesses who failed to

understand the problems and time pressures; and these people were to be avoided.

It seemed, nevertheless, that the commercial side of the work had to be played down, with the idea of respectability and discretion being heavily linked with 'home', and with its legitimacy. This was found in earlier research into middle class women providing Bed and Breakfast in similarly 'respectable' middle class areas. This attitude was believed to be built into the planning policy, if not always in the legislation. In general it was felt that if one were 'discrete' and did not cause problems with neighbours then there would be no problem. Where planning legislation was inescapable, as for the school, the case was jeopardised by the house being in a 'residential road', and approval was gained with great difficulty. The school principal believed that the planning officers' aim was to have homogeneous areas or zones, planned by them: essentially commercial/industrial or residential (non-commercial).

So the concept of boundaries operated at different levels and dimensions; these can be found reflected in the theoretical literature.

Irving Goffman's 'bounded regions' is an obvious starting point. It had been helpful in earlier research, in explaining the ambiguous position of the women providing Bed and Breakfast. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* Goffman describes two kinds of bounded region:

'front regions where a particular performance is or may be in progress, and back regions where action occurs that is related to the performance but inconsistent with the appearance fostered by the performance' (Goffman 1959:135).

So there is also the notion of appropriateness to the different areas. Following Goffman's 'frame analysis', the context in which interaction occurs is routinely monitored, according to Giddens,' and 'the time-space zoning of encounters is often fundamental to the performances that are carried on' (Giddens 1984:120-1). One manifestation of this is the way in which the existence and use of back regions 'helps to explain a good deal of what goes on in "public" settings of activity' (Giddens ibid:121). In formal settings of interaction it is the back regions, together with 'involvement shields' (barriers to perception), that will be instrumental in facilitating appropriate behaviour in the front region.

Goffman applied this conceptual framework to household activity:

'The line (dividing front and back regions) is illustrated everywhere in our society. ... The bathroom and bedroom ... are places from which the down-stairs audience can be excluded' (Goffman 1959:124).

Activities were further identified according to roles, a central focus of Goffman's work. For example, ambiguity might have to be overcome where roles overlap:

'In serving a dinner for friends she (the hostess) must manage the kitchen dirty work in such a way as to enable her to switch back and forth between the roles of domestic and hostess, altering her activity, her manner, and her temper, as she passes in and out of the dining-room' (op cit:124).

Where, earlier, these roles were carried out by different people in a middle-class household characterised by 'internal differentiation' (Giddens 1984:121), they had now to be managed by one person. It had become necessary to cross the boundary between the back and front regions as a matter of routine. In *Asylums* - a study of institutional life - Goffman developed this further, and described how the boundary that an individual normally places 'between his being and the environment' can be 'invaded' (Goffman 1961:32).

The home has come to be seen as the 'back region', where control can be relaxed (Giddens op cit: 121), leaving work in a clearly defined and public 'front region'. The former permits the latter. Where the distinction between the two no longer exists it seems likely that ambiguity will result. Roles and expectations may be unclear. It is significant that Goffman's interest was in relatively fluid settings, and he had less to say about contexts described by Giddens as 'more highly organized and ritual settings of co-presence' (Giddens op cit:121), which might typically be found in organisations.

Whether within the home, or in an organization, the activities

in the different areas will be perceived and interpreted differently. This aspect is taken up by Giddens, in his analysis of Goffman's related concept, 'boundary markers', which

'occur before and after the activity in time and may be circumscriptive in space; in brief, there are temporal and spatial brackets ... one may speak, then, of opening and closing temporal brackets and bounding spatial brackets' (Goffman 1974:251-2, quoted in Giddens 1987:120).

Like space, time has become a significant boundary marker; this was apparent in the earlier section on flexibility. It was noted in chapter 3 that modern time had become quantifiable, clock time, but had also become decontextualized (Adam 1990) or disembedded (Giddens 1990). According to Adam this understanding of time had become taken for granted to such an extent that it dominated the Western world (Adam 1990:67). But those who worked from home did not have the same reason to be dominated by modern time - a time heavily linked to the modern idea of work in an industrial, organisational, factory or office setting. For them it was not necessarily the measure of work, as it was the work itself that was normally paid for. There might be periods of almost continuous work and others of intermittent work, and where there was some choice the work could be spread across the hours of the day in whatever pattern seemed appropriate and convenient. The graphic artist's wife had made the point that this might depend on the weather, for example.

But legitimacy was essential, and there was some indication that

the term 'professional' was identified with. In terms of Mary Douglas's group boundaries, those who work from home could be classified as individualist: low 'grid' (individuation) and low 'group' (social incorporation). Grid is to do with mode of control, so,

'At the strong end there are visible rules about space and time related to social roles; at the other end, near zero, the formal classifications fade, and finally vanish' (Douglas 1976:8).

The group dimension, on the other hand,

'is defined in terms of the claims it makes over its constituent members, the boundary it draws around them, the rights it confers on them to use its name and other protections, and the levies and constraints it applies' (ibid:8).

The individualist group 'is not constrained by substantive signs of ascribed status: all the existing classifications are only provisional negotiable boundaries' (Douglas 1976:21). In this ambiguous situation, association with the term professional may be a way of negotiating an appropriate status.

Finally, therefore, and probably most important of all the factors considered here, the boundaries as they affect those who work from home are in important respects ideological. It is in post-modern literature that we find the concept of the 'transgression' of boundaries, and it is this that captures the extent to which those who work from home are seen as, and see themselves as, a deviant group which does not adhere to what is

considered normal.

## **Conclusion**

Three main conclusions were reached that would influence further data gathering and theoretical development, and the main interviews in particular:

### (1) Sample

The pilot sample represented a group of people who were both self-employed and worked from home; they were distinctive for this reason and because they were neither homeworkers nor teleworkers. A main (theoretical) sample that again represented this group was indicated.

### (2) Interview structure

During the interviews themselves it was necessary to concentrate on which issues had been covered and which had not. It has already been noted that much of what was said by the interviewees during the interviews was not apparently 'heard' at that time but seemed to be heard for the first time when the taped interviews were transcribed. This is to be expected, but was probably exacerbated by having to concentrate on topics covered in this way. It was also apparent that the lack of control over question wording meant that it was all too easy to fall into the trap of saying too much, perhaps in the name of probing and directing. And finally that the lack of structure, while it met some of the essential demands of an exploratory approach, made comparability between the main areas covered in the interviews difficult. It

seemed that if the questions were worded to sound as natural as possible, and interviewing/counselling skills (good eye contact, head nods, reflection, etc.) used to encourage a full response, the strengths of an open-ended interview style could be combined with greater ease of comparability in a semi-standardised interview schedule.

### (3) Interview content

It was clear from the start - that is, even while the interviews were taking place, and certainly during the transcription of the tapes - that too wide a range of issues had been attempted. This can be appropriate at an exploratory stage, but there was a clear need for greater focus on fewer issues. The more practical and technical issues were found to be little more than a diversion from, or at most an extension of, the main areas of interest. They appeared to be secondary to the more theoretically informed issues such as legitimacy, autonomy and the crossing of ideological boundaries. More specifically, questions concerning the amount of technology used seemed to be fairly irrelevant. This was not felt to be so surprising at the time; and would perhaps be more so now, in view of the interest taken in this subject, except for the evidence that the amount of attention has tended to be out of all proportion to its relevance.

It was decided that the main interviews would again focus on a theoretical sample, but would be more structured and also more limited in the range of areas covered. The intention was that more focused data gathering would permit greater depth of



analysis. This would give greater scope for the emergence and scrutiny of themes and concepts.

## CHAPTER 6

### MAIN INTERVIEWS: SAMPLE AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

The pilot interviews had supported the original proposition that the terms *home* and *work* were problematic for those who combined the two; and that the resulting ambiguity meant drawing on strategies available. The ambiguity seemed to arise from the crossing of **boundaries**, particularly ideological boundaries, between 'home' and 'work'. Incorporated within this transgression was a deviant use of time and space.

Those interviewed described the advantages of their situation in terms of **autonomy**: being their own boss. This was often expressed in terms of 'flexibility' in the use of time, to their own and their clients' benefit. But there was a down side to the flexibility, which could involve being available all hours with little control over the work flow. Furthermore, **legitimacy** could be problematic because normative boundaries had been crossed. It could not be taken for granted as it was felt it might be in a more conventional place of work away from home.

The analysis of the pilot interviews, therefore, suggested the direction the main interviews should take. The background to these, together with a preliminary analysis focusing on autonomy, are the subject of this chapter; the main analysis of the interviews is addressed in the following chapter.

## THE SAMPLE

A theoretical sample was again indicated for the main interviews; it should be 'theoretically sensitive' to the 'emergent analytic framework' (Glaser and Strauss 1967:46, 53). The generation of concepts was a priority, identification of emergent themes at the pilot stage having provided a first step in this process.

It was not a priority to use a large sample, but to keep the focus on qualitative aspects; but it was considered important to transcribe the interviews verbatim. The emphasis was to be on depth rather than breadth of analysis, and the main interviews were to be more focused than the pilot interviews. This would be in line with the method of interpretation, together with a broadly hermeneutic approach (outlined in Chapter 4), both of which would indicate an emphasis on meaning - or representation - and what a specific group of people 'know'.

The defining characteristic of those interviewed would be that they used their home as their place of work. For reasons explained in the first chapter, and confirmed by the pilot stage, it was necessary to find a sample that drew on neither 'homeworkers' nor 'teleworkers'. A specifically independent and self-employed group, working on their own account, was therefore to be targeted for further - more 'focused' - interviews. They represent a distinctive group, relatively neglected in their own right.

The population from which the sample was drawn was the contact

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The population from which the sample was drawn was the contact

list of the members of an organisation of home-based workers called *Ownbase*, an organisation set up by and for people who worked at home. As a member of the organisation, there would be no problem in contacting those on the list. Furthermore, I had the impression from the newsletter and contact list that the membership reflected the stated criteria: they were overwhelmingly self-employed, working on their own account, and neither 'homeworker' nor 'teleworker' seemed an appropriate description. The organisation never used the term *homeworker* though some literature referred to 'home worker'; and the survey carried out later by *Ownbase* found that a section in the newsletter, introduced by the new editor and headed 'Teleworking', was the 'most disliked' section of the newsletter and was therefore dropped (*Ownbase Newsletter* March/April 1993:9).

This was a self-selected group. By joining an organisation called *Ownbase* (originally *Homebase*), members identified themselves in this way as independently working at home; that is, rather than as small firms or businesses, or as employees (homeworkers or teleworkers) attached to a parent company. *Ownbase* was, and still is, distinctive for this reason; and the membership as a whole could be thought of as a theoretical sample.

It is precisely because they work independently that many of the members seek contact with others who are working in the same way. In a 1990 survey carried out by *Ownbase*, it was found that the

highest proportion (36%) said they joined the organisation for 'mutual support and companionship of like minds' (Ownbase Newsletter July 1990:9). A committee of members runs the organisation, and members contribute to the newsletter.

### **Sample Selection**

The contact list did not include all members, as the release of details - telephone number and address - was optional. It was circulated annually, and at the time of the interviews contained 78 names, listed in alphabetical order. Members were drawn from all parts of the country. It would have been impractical and inappropriately expensive to travel a great distance, but it was felt that some kind of variation of area might contribute to the analysis, so half the sample was taken from the rural Surrey/Sussex area and half from London (not represented in the pilots). This meant that suburban areas, as such, were omitted. That this was possibly quite significant was not entirely obvious at the time. Finally, again for reasons of balance and possible comparison, half the interviewees were male and half female.

Members listed in the contact list were therefore marked up as Female/Outside London, Female/London, Male/Outside London and Male/London. There were not many in each group, but where there were more than five the first five in the category were contacted; for the Male/London group there were only three in that category so it was necessary to *snowball* from other Ownbase members to get two extra contacts: a manager of a band and a computer designer. The first was suggested by an Ownbase member

who provided secretarial services, mainly for people who worked from home; she had been contacted initially as a potential interviewee but she was herself no longer home-based. The second was a near neighbour of the woman journalist in the sample. No-one contacted refused to be interviewed.

A brief summary background of those interviewed follows: who these people were, where they lived, what kind of work space they had, and how they came to be working from home (based on answers to question 1 to 3, question 45 and the final section in the interview schedule, Appendix A). The length of time they had been working in this way was included, as well as the length of time they had worked in a more conventional situation previously. They had also been asked how important their income was; previous research with people using their home as a place of work had suggested that it was almost impossible to give a precise account of earned income; it cannot be calculated in the same way as it would be in other circumstances, partly because the domestic and business overheads are difficult to separate. Also, there may be another source of income.

But from these basic details it will be clear that this was a distinctive group, 'purposive' in theoretical terms, that met the parameters set out at the beginning of this chapter and in chapter 4.

Group A: Women - London based

(1) **Journalist**, specialising in film reviews; aged 41, living with her 'partner', with no children. She lived in a three-storey terraced town house in a very pleasant road in a moderately expensive, though still fairly mixed, part of London. She said there were many others working from home in her road, and that the people on the council estate at the back also tended to be around. She had her own office at the top of the house, and had been working from home for 12 years, after two and a half years full-time employment in this country. She had left her original country, South Africa, when a male colleague - who she considered less able - was promoted over her, leaving her to do all the work on a secretary's salary. She went freelance - as a sole trader - on arrival in this country, finding she could not get the kind of job she wanted. She had 'made quite a bit of money', and her income was 'very important', although alone it would not have been sufficient to allow her to live where she did; the house was hers but her partner contributed to the mortgage and expenses. She worked full-time.

(2) **Teletext editor**, aged 38. She lived with her husband and two children (one at school, one at playgroup) in a traditional, small, terraced house dating from the beginning of the century, presumably for local working people. It was in a less fashionable, although predominantly residential, area of north London. She worked in one corner of the kitchen, which had been set up as a work-station, and had been working from home for 6 to 7 years, having worked full-time outside the home for 12 years



previously. She started working from home when she had children; she realised that the work she had been trained in could be done freelance. Her income was 'quite important', as a second income to contribute towards the family's needs. She saw herself as working part-time.

(3) **Publisher of directory for holidays in North America**, aged 42. She lived with her husband and two teenage children in a generously proportioned, terraced, family house - with long windows and a substantial entrance - in a mixed residential area of north London. She had her own office, a large room at the front of the house on the first floor. She had been working from home for two years, but had begun setting up the business over two years while working part-time in a friend's shop (she had worked part-time since having children, and full-time for five years previously); she knew overheads could be high so decided to be home-based. Her income was 'important', as a second income but also because it was her own. She didn't think the terms full-time and part-time were appropriate terms because the amount of work varied.

(4) **An artist and enameller**, aged 48, divorced, with an adult son; she lived alone in the upper two floors of a three-storey terraced house in a popular residential London road. She used two rooms of the house for her work, and had been homebased for 3 years full-time, and part-time 'for many years' before that. She had worked full-time in the U.S. for six years, when her son was young, but had always worked part-time in this country. She

began working at home when she realised she could turn what had been a hobby into an income; also because she wanted to leave the library job she was in because she found the atmosphere unpleasant. Prior to taking up library work she had been an author until a change in the commissioning editor meant less work. She relied 'totally' on the income from her work, but thought of herself as both full-time and part-time because her working pattern was irregular combining some very long working days with some gaps.

(5) **Consultant, running careers advisory service for women**, aged 55, divorced and living alone, with adult children living away from home. She lived in a modern, three-storey, terraced riverside house on the edge of London, and used one of the top rooms as an office and consultation room. She had worked full-time for four and a half years before a break when her first child was born. Since that time she had written books for children, and then studied as a mature student before teaching psychology part-time. She left her teaching post in order to go to the U.S. to do research, and set up her own business when she returned. She had worked from home for five years, and the income from her work was not her only source of income but was important. She saw herself as working full-time.

Group B: Women - outside London

(6) **Illustrator and children's author**, aged 44, married with one of her two children still at home periodically, living in a very comfortable period family house in a rural Sussex village. She

had a large studio at one side of the house, converted for the purpose, and had been working from home for more than ten years. She had worked full-time before having children, and then part-time after the first was born, seeing herself as essentially a 'full-time mother', but was instrumental in setting up a women's refuge during that time. After doing an MA she had taught for two years in an art school while her husband was studying; but found it 'so appalling' that she left, and became a full-time illustrator at home. Originally the illustrating was subsidised by making and selling batiks; the writing came later. She described herself as full-time, and her income as very important as she was well established and earned a 'good deal' more than her husband, a teacher.

(7) **Scientific editor**, aged 40, living with her husband and two school-age children in an attractive, if rather small, family house in a Surrey village. She used her (and her husband's) bedroom for her work; this had been set up as a study, and she only found it inconvenient when she needed to work in the evenings and weekends, although her husband often brought work home too. They were planning to move or extend the existing house, in order to have a room available as a study. She had worked from home for seven and a half years, first for one publishing house and then on a freelance basis, after having children. Before that she had worked for 11 years full-time. She described her income as 'pretty important', particularly because she wanted her children to go to private schools. She saw herself as working nearly full-time.

(8) **Chiropodist and relaxation therapist**, aged 38, living with her husband in a large, three-storey, detached town house in a small seaside town. The properties in her road had been used by doctors and other professions earlier in the century, being opposite the hospital and near the centre of town; but had become rather run-down, and were now being improved again. She had no children. She had been working at home for over a year, having moved during that time in order to have a more appropriate house for the purpose. On the ground floor she had a large chiropody 'surgery', and a separate more informal treatment room for relaxation/stress therapy. Previously she had worked for thirteen years as a teacher in a special education unit, having taken two degrees. While still teaching she took the chiropody course 'for fun'; and at the same time had begun to see the benefit of relaxation techniques with the children. She could see the possibility of making a living working from home, and had become very disillusioned with teaching; with the lack of acknowledgement and resources. She was working full-time and her income was equal to her teacher husband's.

(9) **Translator and lecturer**, aged 61, living with husband in a spacious modern detached house in a quiet cul-de-sac on the edge of a Surrey village. She had taken over one bedroom as her main work-room where she kept files etc., but also used other rooms at times. Her three adult children had all left home and her husband was usually away during the week. She had been working from home for four years, after working full-time, mainly as a teacher or administrator - in this country and abroad - for

twenty years. In her last full-time job outside the home, as a sales office manager, she had been doing translating on an informal (unpaid) basis, but had felt increasingly frustrated about this situation because 'there was no way women had any influence'. She realised she could do translation work on her own account, 'without all this hassle', so she left. She said what she earned was important because she liked to have her own income. She did 'whatever work arrives', so did not think in terms of full-time or part-time.

(10) Antenatal teacher and journalist, aged 45, living at home - a spacious chalet bungalow in a Sussex village - with her husband and teenage son; two older children were at university. The large open-plan room upstairs had been converted for use as a teaching room, and one room downstairs was used as a study. She had been working from home for nineteen years, since her first child was born. Before that she had worked full time as an academic researcher, and after the birth of her first child had negotiated to complete the research work, on a part-time basis, from home. She realised she could work in this way and trained as an antenatal teacher, later writing articles and more recently books. She viewed her income as a second income, but an important contribution to the household. She was 'bordering on' full-time.

#### Group C: Men - London based

(11) Manager of a band, aged 28; single, living with a 'flat-mate' who paid him rent, in a 'modernised' detached house (with

a huge stone and copper fireplace) in a less fashionable part of London. He had converted an upstairs room into a purpose-built office which he was very pleased with. He didn't like the house but it was conveniently placed for access to central London. He had been working from home for one year, and had worked nine years full-time previously, as a soft-ware salesman for a computer company. He had become involved with a band, whose members were his friends; when they wanted a manager they asked him if he would consider it. He was paying a mortgage so had to think carefully before making the change. The amount of time he was required to spend on his work varied, so he thought the terms full-time and part-time were both applicable in his case.

(12) **Computer journalist**, aged 58, living with his wife in a large, comfortable detached family house in an expensive, 'village' area of London; two adult children lived away from home. His study, previously a playroom, was dedicated to his writing. He had been working from home for five years, after 28 years full-time employment; most recently as an executive for a large main-frame computer company. He was one of 5,000 employees made redundant in 1981. He was over fifty and had difficulty getting another job, eventually selling micros for a small dealer. He realised there was a gap in the market, in that no-one was writing about the difference between main-frame and micro-computers and making the link between the two. He started writing and 'hawking' his articles around, left the sales job, and within two years had won a national computer journalism award. He worked full-time, and his income was second to that

of his wife, who was earning more; he also had a pension and other unearned private income.

(13) **Copywriter**, aged 39, living with his wife and young child, in a comfortable semi-detached, villa-style, family house, probably built at the turn of the century, in a quiet residential road in greater London. He had his own office in an upstairs room, and had been working from home for two and a half years, having worked full-time outside the home for ten years before that. In his last but one job as a press officer he had felt he 'wasn't going anywhere', so he moved to a big organisation but realised it was a mistake and 'was desperate to get out of this hole I'd got stuck into'. He had always 'toyed with the idea' of going freelance, and decided to see if he could make a living just writing. He put together a 'portfolio' of things he could do, including house portraits, but it was the PR business that 'took over'. His income was the only income as his wife was not working. He described himself as more than full-time.

(14) **Computer designer**, aged 38, living alone in an attractive old terraced house with sash windows, previously a 'rooming house' which he was renovating with a grant. The area was fairly central, still quite mixed, with a policy of 'generous grants for refurbishment'. One upstairs room was used for the computer work, but he also worked in and on the whole house, and had worked like this for seven years. He had previously been employed in the computer industry, for twelve years; but 'wasn't really getting the remuneration that I felt I deserved or the job

satisfaction', and resented the long hours and travel. He applied for a grant to renovate the house, and left his job, originally intending to spend three or four months on the house before returning to full-time employment. But finding he could easily get freelance computer contracting and consultancy work, was able to support the design work that interested him; he was at the stage of marketing what he had designed, but it had yet to produce any income. After 18 months on his own, he 'definitely didn't want to go back' to outside employment. Apart from the 'grant, he lived on his earned income, and saw himself as working full-time.

(15) **Management consultant**, aged 45, divorced and living in a spacious rented flat with a 'flat mate' - an 'unemployed student' daughter of a friend who paid him rent. Apart from sharing the main rooms, he had his own room which was more of an office than a bedroom; but he had an 'affiliation' with a consultancy centre whose facilities and address he could use. So he remained 'totally independent', but had access to back-up services if and when he wanted them. He had been working independently from home for seven and a half years, but had been working from a home-base for his last employers, an industrial training board, for some years before that. So he had made a gradual transition, and it was 'much like it was before'. He was totally dependent on his own income, and believed he was working more hours than if he was doing a nine to five job; he thought the terms full-term and part-time were irrelevant.



Group D: Men - outside London

(16) **Journalist, specialising in medicine and health**, aged 31, living with his wife in a modern detached house on a small private estate on the edge of a Surrey town. He had converted a sun-room extension at the back of the house into his office, which he had planned carefully. He had been working for four and a half years from home, having worked for eight years full-time outside the home. He had been a science editor on a newspaper for professionals, but left when senior staff made staff under him redundant without consulting him; his position was not threatened but 'because of the way the whole situation had been handled, I volunteered'. Initially this was not accepted as a redundancy, but he was ultimately given a severance payment, and began working from home the following Monday, phoning round contacts he already had. Although his wife was employed full-time outside the home, his was the main income and he worked full-time.

(17) **Cartographer with a printing business**, aged 41, living in a large fairly modern, detached house with a swimming pool, on the edge of a Surrey village, with his wife and eight year old son who was being educated privately. He had a printing room and office at the side of the house, being a conversion of an extension with its own entrance. He had been working from home for nearly a year, after 24 years in the army. He had had to retire from the army on reaching 40, but had wanted to leave anyway because he was 'fed up'. He had made a 'conscious decision' to start his own business four years before he left the

army, so had worked at it part-time, gone on relevant courses, and 'tested the water'. He had worked up a clientele in this way. His income was less than his wife's, as she had a well-paid budget-holding position with a bank, but it was nevertheless significant, and he was working full-time.

(18) **Technical author**, aged 59, he lived with his wife in a large, older style detached house with a large garden, on the edge of a Surrey town. His adult children lived away from home although one visited frequently with her children. He had worked from home for five years, and had a short spell working from home previously as well as thirty years full-time employment outside the home. He had started working from home when his business partnership 'went bust'; he thought it unlikely he'd get employment at 54, but he also felt quite confident about working from home because he had done it before and had found that working this way avoided high overhead costs, and it suited him. He had only moved out of home the first time because his electronic design business had grown to the point where he had decided to take on a partner and employees and needed more space. When he moved back into the home a second time he set himself up as a technical author, writing manuals and sales literature as well as doing occasional teaching (for example, on presentation). His income was the only income, as his wife did not work and he had no occupational pension, and he saw himself as working full-time.

(19) **Patent Agent**, aged 59, married with a boy of ten at prep.

school. He lived in a large family house, in a well established and wooded cul-de-sac on the edge of a Sussex village. He had his own office on the first floor, and had been working from home for five years, after thirty years working in London. The company he had worked for had reduced the size of his department, and although his job was secure he had the option of a 'golden handshake' which would allow him to make a once-for-all settlement with an ex-wife, and set up on his own; he saw this as a 'better way forward'. His income was 'quite important', and his overheads were now considerably reduced. In addition he had a good pension and his wife was working full-time. He saw himself as working predominantly full-time, sometimes part-time.

(20) **Writer/researcher**, aged 61, living with his wife in a fairly small flat on the edge of a Sussex town. He had his own study, and his wife who also worked from home had one end of the living room. He had been working from home for eight to nine years, after 25 years employment, some of which was abroad. It was while he was working on the continent, in marketing, that he decided he could do a better job on his own so he started working from home then. When he returned to the U.K. he continued to work in this way, but as a writer and researcher. His income was 'about 50/50' with his wife's and they considered themselves partners. But her income tended to be regular, every month, whereas he received larger amounts 'at longer term intervals'; he thought the terms full-time and part-time were not appropriate because he worked mainly full-time but sometimes part-time.

### Summary

This was a group of middle-class, well educated and articulate people; they gave the impression of being self-reliant and confident about their work.

In occupational terms, they shared the same characteristics as Haddon and Silverstone's third - independent and self-employed - group, as well as the broadly professional group studied by Fothergill; also, therefore, they corresponded to those identified by the Henley Centre reports as best suited to working at home. Furthermore, they were clearly neither 'homeworkers' nor 'teleworkers' in other than a meaningless and all-embracing sense, which would have been rejected by Pugh (1984) or Huws et al (1990) respectively, and has been rejected here.

The majority of people in this group were in their thirties or forties, a few others - mainly men - in their fifties and sixties, and one in his twenties. This partly explained the fact that few had young children; one woman had a pre-school child, and another woman and three of the men had pre-teenage children. They had all spent some years working in a more conventional way, outside the home.

In general they lived in comfortable family-sized houses in a pleasant environment; the exception being the small flat and the rather small terrace house, although in the latter case a move was planned in the very near future in order to have more space.

The decision to target a London group as well as a 'rural' group was made on the grounds that conclusions reached on the basis of the pilot sample, which represented a rural area only, might not apply to those living in what was assumed to be a very different environment such as London. But differences between the 'country' and London environments were not as significant as might have been thought. The areas of London represented by this sample seemed predominantly residential, with local shops; none was in the City or the West End, for example. All except one of the London group were owner-occupiers (as were all but one of the 'country' group), and the areas they lived in gave the appearance of being fairly settled rather than transitory. On the other hand, they appeared not to be purely suburban, which was equally true of the 'country' group; and this was probably a significant common factor.

Most of those interviewed had a room dedicated to work. All but two had their own office, study or studio; and again, in the case of these two exceptions (the video-text editor who was about to move, and the scientific editor who planned an extension) this situation was likely to improve within a year. In most cases the designated rooms were for work and not for receiving people; only the careers adviser, the antenatal teacher and the chiropodist routinely had clients or patients coming to the house.

The reasons given for working from home indicated that in nearly all cases this involved a degree of choice, and some thought; and even where it was the result of a clear redundancy, an enforced

retirement and a business 'going bust', the resulting careers again indicated careful consideration, and appeared to have been successful. In quite a number of cases the move was a positive response to a situation in which the individual did not like what was going on around them or to them in previous employment. Two women had specifically mentioned being undervalued, and underpaid, in a male-oriented environment. Five of the women had begun working at home after their first child, which had meant a career change for two of them. In the case of the publisher, the illustrator and the antenatal teacher/writer, there were no longer young children at home, so they could presumably have gone back to working outside the home had they wished; the only one who had, the illustrator, soon returned to working at home again.

Whereas some members of the group, such as the patent agent, the illustrator and the scientific editor, already had qualifications that made them more obviously marketable, others such as the researcher, the technical author, the publisher, the antenatal teacher, the chiropodist, and the printer made career changes based on previous experience in order to work in this way. For the last three of these this meant going on courses in order to have marketable skills and qualifications.

Finally, although three had only been working from home for one year, the average for the women was 7 years and for the men 5 years, with more variation amongst the women. In all cases the income from their work was important to them. The majority saw

themselves as working full-time; and even where they qualified this it is likely that, unlike a nine to five job, they only counted productive time.

## **Contact**

The first contact was made by telephone, so it was possible to explain to the prospective interviewees how long the interviews were likely to take and that they were of interest specifically because they worked from home. I introduced myself as attached to the Open University, as well as a member of *Ownbase* running a small business, and kept other information to a minimum. There were no refusals.

## **THE INTERVIEWS**

### **Interviewer/interviewee relationship - reflexivity**

The issue of reflexivity was, as in the pilots, an important consideration that needed to be acknowledged. I introduced myself as a member of *Homebase* (as it was then), running a Bed and Breakfast business; also that I tutored for the Open University, with whom I was doing a research degree.

The advantages and disadvantages of being identified as 'one of them' as against an 'outsider' had to be weighed up; there would be interviewer effects either way. I had joined the original organisation, *Homebase*, after hearing about it on the radio; it seemed to be aiming at people like me - people who worked from home. My own work experience (including teaching on management courses, and a year in a school of architecture), and related

research (on women providing Bed and Breakfast and Open University tutors) contributed further to an interest in assumptions concerning home and work. I was aware that I was one of a minority group of non-conformers who worked from home.

There were clearly disadvantages in this situation, in that I brought with me a distinctive perspective and was already aware of the existing ambiguities, and the need to pick my way around perceptions and assumptions - to endlessly justify. Someone coming from the outside might well notice things that I might not; but most of the existing research suggested that there was little understanding of the experience, and little attempt to question prevailing perceptions and assumptions or to treat concepts as problematic. Most literature - with the exception of the more feminist literature - lacked a critical edge.

On balance, therefore, it was felt that a combination of honesty, evident interest and a shared culture were likely to facilitate a relaxed atmosphere in which to explore issues in more depth.

### **The Interview Schedules**

It was considerations such as these that contributed to the decision to have a more structured interview schedule that could be planned in advance and avoid some of the dangers of impromptu - and possibly leading - questions. The on the spot influence of the interviewer could, that is, be kept to a minimum. Also, the unstructured pilot interviews, though ideal at an exploratory stage, had presented problems of analysis and comparability.



The interview schedule was therefore semi-structured, with specific questions to be asked in the same way, but the order could be varied to some extent in response to the interviewee. This permitted a more focused and standardised structure. Interviewing/counselling skills, together with supplementary questions, would be relied on to encourage as full a response as possible.

The schedule began with questions about the length of time the person had been working at home, and how this had come about, and was subsequently divided into sections under the headings: **home, work, work identity, time, space, autonomy, legitimacy and background** (See Appendix A). The main concern of the first section, on **home**, was the interviewees' definition of home, their attitude to it, what it meant to them, and how they used it; also how they believed their own perception compared with what they believed to be a general view of home. The words and images they associated with 'home' were of particular interest. The sections on **work** and **work identity** were very similar in focus: their definition of work, what it meant to them, and their attitude to it; and how this compared with a perceived general view, particularly concerning work carried out at home. It also looked at how they saw their own work, how they presented themselves to and dealt with people outside, and what they saw as the advantages and disadvantages of working at home. Again, the words they used and identified with were of particular interest. There followed two shorter sections on **time** and **space**, with the focus once more on the interviewees' perception, and

use, of both. Finally were two similarly short sections under the heading of **autonomy** and **legitimacy**, to pick up on concepts that were found to be particularly relevant in the pilot interviews.

### **The Interviews**

The interviews took place in the homes of those interviewed. The atmosphere was good, with only two women - who routinely interviewed other people (the antenatal teacher and writer, and the journalist) - being less at ease initially, probably because they were not used to being on the other side of an interview. The interviews lasted over an hour in each case, usually an hour and a half, with no-one else present. Informal discussion was kept to a minimum before the actual interview, with some after the interview.

It was necessary to explain at the outset that the interviews would be tape-recorded, and the tape-recorder was put out of the line of eye contact. Chairs were placed at a comfortable angle to one another, and were of equal height where possible. Interviewing/counselling skills (good eye contact, active and attentive listening, reinforcing head-nods and 'm-m-m's etc.) were used to encourage the interviewees to talk as freely and fully as possible in response to the questions. In each case the interview schedule was put on my lap or to one side, therefore requiring just a glance; the aim being to break eye contact as infrequently and inconspicuously as possible. Responses were followed up where appropriate, with supplementary questions,

and/or summarising and reflecting back (see Nelson-Jones 1988).

### **Transcription**

The interview tapes were transcribed verbatim, and this work was carried out between the interviews where possible. This was an important, and active, part of the initial analysis as already indicated; it informed the continuing literature search, and further reading, and generated ideas. The interview schedules were not altered but the earlier interviews suggested the areas that were likely to be theoretically fruitful.

An ordinary tape-recorder had been used for the interviews so the transcribing could not be done quickly. It was often necessary to listen to the tapes very carefully in order to catch what was said, but this was nevertheless a very constructive exercise. The transcribed interviews ranged in length from 33 to 60 double-spaced pages (an average of 43 pages); over 850 pages in all.

### **Preliminary analysis**

One of the main themes to emerge from the pilot interviews was that of autonomy and flexibility, perceived as the main advantage of the way those interviewed worked. But it was not always entirely clear to what extent it was a feature of being self-employed and/or working from home. Before getting on to the main area of interest - specifically focusing on 'home' and 'work' as problematic concepts - the attitude of the group towards their work and their felt autonomy was again an important

issue to be addressed. They had been asked how important was their work to them; how well did it work for them, and what did they like or dislike about it, in comparison with working outside the home?

When asked *how important their work was to them (Q36)*, the group overwhelmingly responded in a very positive way. Amongst the women, two said it was 'vital'. The enameller (4) enlarged on this: 'I've often thought if I didn't have to earn my living I think I'd go crazy'; the illustrator (6) did not feel it necessary to explain further. Five others said 'very important'. Four of these made additional comments: 'It gains me money for my doing and I go out and do fun things' (1); 'I do other things as well (for example, school helper) and that is also very important' (2); 'I think it's needing an identity apart from being a mother and wife' (3); 'I'm not a career oriented person. To me a career person works up a ladder - but I do identify with business people' (8). The scientific editor (7) gave a response that covered a number of these points:

'It's important for various reasons. It's important because it keeps my brain active - I think I'd go potty if I didn't have it - and it's quite important financially. Also just self-respect.'

The two eldest women, the careers consultant (5) and the translator (9), reflected on their situation slightly differently. The former said her situation was changing, and explained that,

'it was terribly important up until a year ago. In

the last year there have been a lot of changes (daughter married; mother died) and I'm still thinking and deciding how much I want to just keep things as they are. I'd probably like to keep things as they are for another year or two.'

But, whereas she was contemplating a gradual disengagement, the translator said, 'One thing I'm terrified of really is the time when I can't work, which is again another reason for working at home - age is no barrier.' In both cases they felt they had some choice in the matter, which they seemed to value.

Of the men, the copywriter (13) said work was 'not greatly important' to him; that if he were not paid, he would not do it. The researcher said his work was very important to him, but that he 'could live without it'; he was a cricket enthusiast, and would have liked to spend more time following it. He explained: 'I don't work because I love working, it just so happens that I like what I do', and described himself as 'meticulous'; he took pride in his work. The computer designer said his work was 'pretty important - important to me'. His description of himself was a 'perfectionist'.

Others were more expansive. The most enthusiastic were the medical journalist (16) - 'Very important. Without it I wouldn't feel happy because I enjoy doing it, and without it I'd be terribly bored' - and the technical author (18) - 'Very important. I live for it. I love my work. I love being up here'. The management consultant said it was an important way

of representing himself to the world, and that he was 'working to live, not living to work'; he did not like 'working for organisations from the inside'. For the printer it was 'a hobby as well (as being very important)', and he said he had to 'give them (his customers) one hundred and fifty per cent'.

Two of the older men found that it was becoming more important. The computer journalist (12) said,

'Funnily enough, more important now than when I was working for a big company. Then it was something to earn money but not really to put my heart and soul into - but now I put much more of my heart and soul into it - writing about what interests me. I believe in people working at home'.

The patent agent (19) said it was becoming a more important part of his income, to pay school fees and other things; also because he enjoyed his particular specialism: 'having been involved in technology for years you always want to be involved'.

Finally, the youngest and newest to working from home, the manager of the band (11), responded 'absolutely' (that his work was important to him), although he felt he needed to learn 'not to let it take me over quite as much'. However he continued, 'but my whole life has been turned around and improved by the fact that I'm doing what I'm doing'. He reflected the general impression of the group as a whole: involvement with their work, and a high level of job satisfaction. The work did not seem to be set aside in a separate compartment, as in Luckmann's 'small

life worlds of modern man' (Luckmann 1970, in Brown and Stevens 1975:311).

A later question, asking them *how well they thought work combined with home (Q51)* produced no negative responses; responses were mostly very positive, some unreservedly so; for example, 'perfectly' (1), 'combines perfectly' (4), 'very well' (12). But more than half, and more men than women, emphasised that this was **their** experience; for example, 'for me, fine' (1), 'works well for me' (8), 'in my case, quite well' (9), 'for me, ideal' (10). One suggested it might depend on circumstances, 'in my situation very well' (16); another to the individual, 'for me, pretty well, but I don't think it would for a lot of people' (13); and yet another said he was 'so used to it now' that he had found it difficult to answer, but that it was 'nicely integrated for me' (15). The women qualified their positive responses less often; just one said it was easier now than when she was trying to write with the children at home (5), and another that it worked well if one was disciplined (3).

When asked directly *if they liked working at home (Q63)*, all twenty answered yes. They were also asked to compare their present situation with working outside home in terms of **control**. When asked if they felt more in control than they would if they went out to work (Q64), again the answers were affirmative, and some enthusiastically so: 'absolutely, yes' (4); 'yes, definitely' (3 and 18); 'yes, I couldn't give up control now' (13). Two of the men (14 and 17) said they would be equally in

control if they returned to outside employment because they would expect a fairly senior position. Another question (Q81) asked how much control they had over the various aspects of their life: specifically, their time, their work space, their work and their home. It was suggested that they should indicate whether they were (a) in control, (b) just about in control, or (c) not really in control. One, who lived in a flat, said he was not as in control of his workspace as he would like (20), and another pointed to the fact that his workload was dictated by clients (13), and his was the only answer in which there was any indication of possible stress although his demeanour did not suggest this. But the majority again gave an unequivocal 'in control' reply. Again some of these were quite emphatic, for example, 'always in control' (1), 'totally in control' (4), 'I'm very much in control' (14). Finally, there were six (four women and two men) who said they were 'just about in control' - which was a rather ambiguous option, and although most said it with a laugh, it may have reflected the problems of vulnerability associated with flexibility noted in the last chapter.

But there was unanimity in response to being asked *if they ever thought they would like to go back to working outside home (Q52)*; none replied 'yes', whereas there were quite a few very adamant variations of 'no': one a straight 'no' (12); one 'no, no way' (18); four 'never's (1, 10, 16 and 20); one 'never, never, never' (4); and one 'never, never, never ever, ever - never again' (13). In general, the most adamant seemed to be the men, although the medical journalist and the printer implied that if they had an



offer they felt they could not refuse - 'an amazing offer' (16), 'seventy or eighty grand' (17) - they might reconsider. But the patent agent said he would have to be remunerated for not working at home, if he were ever to consider it. The management consultant said he couldn't because he was a 'psychological misfit' and reacted badly to authority figures, whereas the manager of the band thought he might find it necessary to have a base in central London at some point, but he would always have an office at home for convenience. The computer consultant thought he was fortunate in that his work took him out anyway: 'I do get to go and work at companies, to do things'. This also meant that,

'I see people at work, and I see how they have to, on the dot of twelve thirty, go out and take their lunch ... not that I'd ever get involved in those sort of restrictions. And I also see the politics and things that go on in office environments and company environments, and I'm really quite happy to be away from it' (14).

The woman scientific editor also said that in the course of her work she already went to outside work-places; she said she would not like to work full-time outside home again because of the lack of flexibility. She and the careers consultant said they might consider something part-time, 'special' or temporary. Of the other women, the videotext editor (2) and the translator (9) - one with young children and the other living alone during the week - said they sometimes thought they might like more contact

with others. The illustrator said she had felt a bit isolated earlier, but now found her work so absorbing that this did not apply; the publisher similarly said she enjoyed what she was doing, even things that might seem boring if done for someone else. The chiropodist and the translator said they would not want to work for someone else again. This last comment, associating working outside home with working for someone else, and the implication of being employed, was one such that suggested that it was sometimes difficult to separate the fact of working at home from being self-employed. This is perhaps not surprising; being self-employed in outside premises would probably not have been a viable proposition for this group, as the overheads would normally have been prohibitive. Using their home had allowed most of them to be self-employed also - to be their 'own boss' - whereas working outside would mean being employed. For them the two factors tended to go together.

Nevertheless, the overall picture was one of preference for working from home, as well as being self-employed - and there was little desire to work outside home again (particularly amongst the men). This was given further support from answers to a pair of questions that asked what they would miss if they went back to working outside home (Q53), and what they would be glad to get away from (Q54). Asked in this way a comparison between the two ways of working was specifically sought, to cut out advantages and disadvantages that might apply to both.

When asked *what they would miss if they went back to working*

*outside home* (Q53) - the advantages of working from home - the responses were mostly quite brief and informative, and were not followed up with supplementary questions. The words that cropped up more often than any other were 'flexibility' and 'freedom'. These could be interpreted as representing two aspects of **autonomy**: self-government and personal freedom.

Although *flexibility* seemed to refer to choice in the use of time, the implication was again to do with being in control; being able to organise the day, arrange time off, and even holidays were mentioned by two of the group. Examples were: 'Flexibility in how to plan your day' (5); 'Flexibility and holidays - I can take six weeks at the same time as my husband' (7); 'Flexibility - during the day' (9); 'Flexibility - the nicest thing is the removal of time parameters' (11); 'I'd miss the flexibility, the ability to schedule my time' (19); 'Flexibility more than anything else, and just the opportunity to take time off when I wanted it. Also holiday time' (15). Other examples not mentioning flexibility as such were: 'I can decide to go out because it's a nice day' (4); 'If something occurs to me any time of the day or night, I can go and do it here' (12); 'I can start and stop work when I like. I can take a day off' (14). The last person went on to say he was totally in control of his own destiny, and all the references to flexibility concerned the use of time that did not conform to a nine to five existence.

Examples of references to *freedom* were: 'I would miss the freedom

to choose' (3); 'Oh, freedom, freedom - to be your own boss' (13); 'Freedom to do what I want when I want and how I want, and the lack of supervision - "voluntary application"' (20). Some linked this personal freedom to **not** being with other people all the time: 'I would miss the autonomy, the freedom, the lack of politics - I would hate having to go back to that' (16); 'Peace, quiet, solitude, space, freedom to do exactly what I want to do. After being with someone I have to digest it - it takes energy' (6). The technical author (18) was quite expansive:

'I would object to travelling every day - I would miss the sense of freedom and personal self-reliance that I have here, which is important to me. The "self" bits - the fact that I am doing this and no-one else is pushing me, and I'm not part of anyone else's hassle. I'm an isolated unit; I'm the boss.'

There were other examples suggesting that having autonomy, in terms of independence - being 'one's own boss' - was similarly valued. For example: 'Running my own life - doing what I like' (1); 'Dressing like this (casually)' (17); 'Independence - I don't really fit into working for someone else' (8). The careers consultant 5) said she would miss:

'A lot of autonomy; nobody to tell you what to do. I can be as warm or as cold, or have as many cups of coffee or whatever, as I like. A great deal of freedom - quite self-indulgent sometimes.'

Just two of those interviewed - the videotext editor (2) and the printer (17) - mentioned more time with their family.

When asked what they would be glad to get away from if they returned to working outside home (Q54) - the disadvantages of working from home - six of the men and one of the women said there was nothing. Of the other men, the computer journalist (12) said he might find working at home more difficult if his wife did not go out to work, as she might make more demands on his time in terms of doing things together. The computer consultant and designer said he missed being part of a team, but could compensate for this: 'There's no-one to share or celebrate a breakthrough with - but I can usually find someone to tell ' (14). The management consultant (15) said he sometimes had problems of motivation, but again he could call on someone else and had a 'co-coach' for this purpose. The researcher had a very specific problem of noise and said he 'would like to get away from the young man next door and his loud record player' (20).

None of the men said they had a problem with being isolated, but five of the women mentioned this. For the mother of young children it was 'Lack of like minded company' (2), and the careers consultant who lived alone found that 'You could easily get isolated - you have to make an effort to stay involved' (5). The translator was also alone during the week, and similarly found that 'it can be lonely' (9). These examples did not indicate a specific desire to go back to working outside home, and seemed to be associated with having a pre-school child at home or living alone, but two others - the scientific editor and the antenatal teacher - said that they missed the 'soap opera of office life which can be quite stimulating' (7) and 'being part

of a team' (10), respectively. This was in contrast with the two men who had been glad to get away from 'office politics' (14 and 16).

The journalist (1) and the ante-natal teacher (10), however, made similar points about the way their work was perceived: 'Lack of status - being seen as a disposable asset' (1); 'Under-recognised, paid less' (10). Here again was an indication that, despite the very positive way they presented themselves and their situation, there could be a problem of legitimacy and pull on the market.

That this was so was confirmed by responses to a further question that presented those interviewed with a choice between two work identities. They were asked whether they saw themselves as (a) *'part of a changing (and perhaps exciting) new pattern of work - with greater flexibility and autonomy'*, or (b) *'part of a peripheral, secondary, and perhaps part-time workforce; less well-paid, less secure than the primary workforce?'* (Q48)

The first statement, (a), was designed to represent the way in which working from home was seen by writers such as Charles Handy, sometimes considered rather utopian (the relevance of autonomy and flexibility having been indicated in the pilots). The second statement, (b), was an amalgam of the way in which 'homeworkers' and contracted out workers have often been portrayed. This forced choice was designed as a trigger, with probes to encourage consideration of the rejected option. It was

originally thought that the responses might go either way, as both descriptions seemed to exaggerate, in a positive and negative way respectively.

In the event, only one said she identified with (b); this was the ante-natal teacher and writer (10). She said 'I'm afraid I identify with that last one'. When asked if there were any parts of (a) that were relevant she said, 'the greater flexibility and autonomy is one reason why I do it'. But it was the idea that it was a new way of working that she was uncertain about; there had always been 'people at home with young children doing a bit on the side'. However, she added that from her experience with other mothers she believed that 'there are a lot of mums starting up new little bits and bobs at home'. Although she was the only one to identify with (b) rather than (a), the way in which she could identify with the terms *flexibility* and *autonomy* was again in line with the earlier analysis; and two others initially said neither (a) nor (b) mainly for the same reason - that they did not see it as 'a new pattern of work'.

First, the illustrator (6) explained,

'I'm doing something that illustrators have been doing for a hundred years; I mean the actual work pattern I follow has been the same for illustrators for a very long time.'

However, she went on to say that she believed that the 'new pattern of work' probably made use of far more people like her, but 'using them where it shouldn't'. She gave as an example her

son who was 'illegally' taken on as self-employed, so that the employer might avoid National Insurance, in contrast with her own position: 'I'm a genuine schedule D'. She was also the only one to see the idea of flexibility in a less than positive way:

'You've got "flexibility" to work all the hours God sends, if you can physically survive them. But I don't know whether you'd call that a freedom - the "freedom" to work yourself to death.'

She recalled having taken on a commission with an unrealistic deadline to meet, resulting in a permanent injury to her right arm. Finally she said, 'exploitation of freelance people has always existed - it's not anything new'.

Second, the manager of the band (11) said he 'would definitely identify with' greater autonomy and flexibility. But he added that he did not think there was anything new about what he was doing: 'I mean I work the same as everyone else works - I work very hard - I just happen to work from home'. On the question of security he said, 'You're secure as long as you have commissionable earnings. ... Your revenue is generated in maybe one or two major transactions a year.' What he was describing was a potential insecurity and dependence on others.

Two of the men, the computer designer (14) and the medical journalist (16), gave unequivocally positive responses to (a) despite probing. The former said there was nothing in (b) which was relevant, 'No, almost the complete opposite'; and the latter said simply that he believed that (a) described how he saw



himself.

Five of the responses were fairly similar, in that they identified with (a), but said there were aspects of (b) which were relevant. The most direct of these was the enameller (4) who, having said she thought (a) applied, acknowledged that she was probably less well paid and less secure, but she did not feel peripheral, 'no, no, not at all; I don't feel peripheral, not really'. The response of the careers consultant was very similar, being a qualification of (a) in terms of security and pay; she wondered if she should be 'more assertive about it'. Although she believed that being peripheral was part of her situation, she just saw it as 'a different side of it'. The translator said she would say (a), but when asked if there were any parts of (b) that might be relevant, she thought she might be undervalued a little, and underpaid perhaps, 'But certainly the whole idea of excitement and new things that are possible over the next six months ... I've got to make some decisions quite soon'. She said there was an 'uncertainty of not knowing what to charge, and not knowing how certain the future is'. She was, she said, 'at the mercy of the firms that I work for', and she had found 'an awful lot of inefficiency'. So she seemed to feel dependent rather than peripheral.

Four of the group focused on the idea that they were part of a 'new pattern of work'. The computer journalist (12) said that (a) was what he would like to be, but wondered if it was (b).

Then he said, 'No, I think it is changing. More people are doing it'; he went on to say that there had been a great deal of interest in an article he wrote on working from home. When it was suggested that he seemed to identify with this way of working in a very positive way he agreed, 'Absolutely'. Asked if he thought parts of (b) applied he said it was 'obviously less secure', but added, 'Not that that worries me - I wouldn't have it any other way.' He seemed to be saying that he enjoyed the personal challenge.

The printer (17) saw 'people who work from home' as an 'emerging force', and believed that 'more people are taking work in the home seriously and doing it in a very full-time sense.' Like the computer journalist, he seemed to encourage others, so if anyone asked his advice he would 'talk to anyone, about business, print or whatever'. He was happy to do this free and if he had to make up the time he would 'make it up in the evenings'. The copywriter (13) made the same point from the opposite angle. Having said that he identified with (a) 80% and (b) 20%, depending how good he felt, he went on to say,

'Sometimes you think you're on the outside and you're never going to get back in, and then you look at these poor sods who are on the inside and you think "yes, I'm the future and you're the past".'

The final one of the four, the chiropodist (8), believed there were two current work-related 'models'; one she saw as the 'loads of money model', with which she did not identify, and the other was the 'homebased model', which she identified with in an

apparently positive way. When asked if there were any parts of (b) she identified with she said,

'I thought I would. When I left teaching I thought "oh, well, I won't be making as much, but I'll do a bit of this and a bit of that" - quite enjoyable. But it hasn't worked out like that. I don't feel peripheral, by any means. And I don't feel lowly.'

The responses of two others contrasted the advantages and disadvantages of modern technology. The videotext editor said it depended how cheerful she was feeling, but 'if I've got a lot of work on, and it seems worth while, then definitely (a)'. Most of the time she felt she was 'just plodding', but she did not believe she was underpaid. It depended how well the work was going. But she did say she felt peripheral, and later explained that she found it,

'very difficult to keep a link with that work (i.e. videotext editing); because it's a modern field, it changes a lot and it is difficult to keep up with what's happening. I think the only way in this field is to stay in an office, to keep up really.'

This was a particularly interesting comment in view of the supposed potential of distance working with modern technology. On the other hand, the scientific editor said she would 'identify more with the first' with 'a bit of the second ... when one thinks of the secondary workforce'; the hourly pay was the same but she did not have the 'perks' such as a pension. She focused on the idea that it was 'changing and exciting', and related this

to developments in the use of computers to some extent, but in her case the technology was a resource (or enabler) rather than the basis of the work. She said that authors were increasingly submitting their manuscripts on disc, and saw the prospect of being able to do her work 'straight from disc' as 'a bit more exciting'. She said the publishers were experimenting with this to see 'whether the editors should mark up the headings straight on a disc, or whether it would then go out to a computer bureau to put in headings sizes and layout and what have you'.

The patent agent said he would identify with (a), and went on to say that he believed that half the patent agents were sole traders like himself, and that of those two thirds worked from home. He said that in general patent agents were thought to charge too much, and they had been investigated by the Office of Fair Trading, but the advantage of working from home was that he was 'passing on my low overheads to the clients'. He further noted that 'a lot of the clients couldn't afford the London rates anyway'. Working as he did, he was also having to carry on his own pension scheme, and he acknowledged that he did not have security, but he counteracted this by taking on 'a lot of small clients' rather than relying on one big one; the technical author (18) talked of keeping a 'number of plates spinning'. This was typical of the group.

The remaining two responses emphasised the importance of image. The management consultant said 'certainly (a), not (b)'. He said some people have 'marginalised themselves', and gave the example

of 'damn good trainers' who charged a small fee,

'whereas they could see themselves, by using slightly different terminology, by slightly stepping up, jacking up the level of what they do, they could put themselves in a completely different ball game.'

Asked if he felt secure, he said 'not totally', as much depended on how the government handled the economy, but he felt part of the primary workforce because 'a consultant does have a major impact on an organization'.

Finally, the woman journalist (1) said, 'I think the reality is the second, but I identify with the first'. Asked whether she was less secure than the primary workforce, she replied 'yes, totally'. When further asked about pay, she explained:

'Totally less well paid. But I choose to identify with the first one. We get paid half what employed people are paid, and we've got absolutely no perks - no pensions. Nobody gives a damn if we've got a week off for the 'flu; the government doesn't give a damn. I think it's a very under-looked-after segment of society.'

When asked again if she nevertheless identified with (a), she said she did, and continued,

'All me and mine are quite powerful, and we have our own sort of work facade or profile, which is quite powerful - don't mess with us. Because we're all quite secure in our way; but nevertheless we still get underpaid and we still don't get pensions.'

She believed they were underpaid because they were 'the other side of the establishment fence' - they had transgressed the boundary. Later she said that in journalism,

'if you're freelance - if you're successful freelance - you tend to be brighter than the staff, because the staff are sheltered under the office umbrella and everything is done for you ... and it doesn't matter if you're drunk at three after a long lunch. Whereas if you're freelance and you're drunk at three, only you can lose.'

She seemed to sum up the contrast between the very positive and self-reliant way she and the others saw and/or presented themselves and the lower pay, insecurity, and vulnerability that they would acknowledge when probed. There was a general sense of independence and enthusiasm, but little sense of materialism, in that the emphasis was on quality of life and 'earning a living' rather than making a lot of money. Whereas some saw themselves as part of a new trend, others pointed out that the way they worked was nothing new. And if option (b) was based on the stereotype of the 'homeworker', this was a representation they overwhelmingly rejected, but there were elements of reality and frustration within it.

### **Conclusion**

For this group of essentially self-employed people, working from home was overwhelmingly preferable to working outside the home; they valued their relative autonomy - flexibility in terms of choice and control, together with personal freedom. This in turn

was associated with being in one's own home, and with being self-employed and independent - their 'own boss' - made possible by using the home as the workplace.

It was this autonomy that was valued, relative though it may be. Drawing on a review of literature carried out by Hakim (1988), Curran observed that, despite the similarity in attitudes found between the self-employed and employees 'across a wide range of issues', there were two distinctive characteristics that set the former group apart:

'First those who work for themselves often display high needs for autonomy and independence and this is often seen as a major motivation for becoming self-employed in some form. Secondly, there is a strong adherence to individualism as opposed to any form of collectivism: the self-employed are often strongly anti-state, anti-trade union and anti-large organisations of all kinds, including large business organisations' (Curran 1989:12).

The commitment to self-employment was, according to Curran, often found to be expressed in terms of 'vehement declarations' that they "could never work for someone else again", together with high levels of job satisfaction compared with employees (ibid:12).

The individualism Curran referred to need not, however, necessarily be associated with self-employment. Reflecting on Lockwood's 1958 study of clerks, Parker observed that they

displayed 'individualistic aspirations to advancement akin to those of professionals'. These aspirations were thought to have arisen from the more *personal quality* of their work environment compared with the 'more impersonal and standardised' working relationships, 'like those of a factory', in the large organisations that followed (Parker 1981:159). Although the predominantly self-employed group interviewed here also tended to reject an organisational environment, it is perhaps the desire for autonomy that made them distinctive.

In view of these observations and previous research with similar groups - that is, independent, self-employed and perhaps semi-professional - the findings reported in this preliminary analysis are not surprising. Evidence from earlier reports suggested these groups are best suited to working from home (Henley Centre for Forecasting 1988; Fothergill 1994 - see Chapter 1). So when asked direct questions there was a very positive response to working from home and a negative one to working outside home. But there was nevertheless a hint of the frustration associated with the way they believed they were viewed; with, that is, the *loss of legitimacy* that is addressed in the next chapter, in juxtaposition with the *autonomy* addressed here. In this way the analysis is moved on to the problematic issues associated with the meaning of 'home' and 'work', and with issues that are both more interesting and relatively ignored.



## CHAPTER 7

### ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS - THE PROBLEM WITH 'HOME'

#### Introduction

From the outset the aim was to question the unquestioned, and to reveal the taken for granted - in this case, the meaning of 'home' and the meaning of 'work'. It has been argued that the process that produced - or constructed - these meanings was partly socio-historical, partly ideological. For meanings are 'never fixed and stable' (Donald and Hall 1990:13); and ideology, defined by Althusser as a 'system of representations' (in Donald and Hall *ibid*:14), provides a kind of knowledge.

Those who worked from home were dealing with concepts 'already constituted as meaningful' (Giddens 1984:284). But rather than being entirely passive participants in the ongoing process of construction, there were indications that they were actively involved in contributing towards a reconstruction. The focus of the interviews was on how they experienced and made sense of this situation - the task being, as Giddens suggested, one of 'mediating the frames of meaning within which actors orient their conduct' (Giddens 1984:284).

The analysis was ongoing, back and forth between data and theory, and in practical terms involved sifting through the transcripts at the same time as continuing the literature review, in order to identify emergent themes based on similarity of meaning and implication. This process could not have been done mechanically.

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this process was that the concept of **home** - including other terms and phrases that included 'home' within them - was problematic for those who worked from home, and for the legitimacy of that work. On this premise, this chapter, and therefore also the analysis, is divided into three main sections. Section **A** compares the meaning of '**home**', to the group, with being seen as '**at home**'; the parallel contrast is drawn between a sense of *autonomy* and *loss of legitimacy*. Section **B** compares the group's definition of 'work' - a broad definition compatible with working from home - with what they saw as the general public's definition of serious work - a narrow definition of work **away from home**. The contrast in this case was between having *autonomy* on the one hand, or *legitimacy* on the other; the implication being that the two were to some extent seen as incompatible. In section **C** a comparison is made between the way members of the group represented their work identity and what they believed '**homeworker**' represented; the parallel contrast drawn in this section is between a representation that enhances both *autonomy* and *legitimacy* and one that denies either.

#### **A. HOME**

If the concept of *home*, and being '**at home**', was central to this analysis, then it was first necessary to discover the meaning '**home**' had for those interviewed. A series of questions asked them for *their definition of home*, *what it meant to them* and *whether they believed their idea of home was fairly conventional or not* (based mainly on questions 4, 5 and 7; together with

questions 6, 23 and 24)

1 An amended definition of home: incorporating work and autonomy

An unexpectedly frequent first reaction to the initial request for a definition of home was one of difficulty in answering the question, indicating that it was both taken for granted and unquestioned; it was a problematic concept. Responses included: 'Oh, boy, that's a tricky one, isn't it.' (5); 'Oh, it's too complex a question. I actually can't answer that.' (6); 'Very difficult that, isn't it?' (10); 'I don't understand the question.' (14); 'I'd never thought of that.' (16); 'Difficult one that - you've got me.' (17); and 'It's hard to define something that seems so obvious.' (2). The suggestion that it was taken for granted was repeated in different forms: 'I don't know - I never thought to put it into words before' (4); 'I suppose I take it for granted' (6). Some struggled considerably and needed a combination of encouraging silences and probes. The computer designer (14), for example, having said he did not understand the question, gave a series of practical uses such as 'where you sleep' before acknowledging that 'I suppose at the back of my mind I always think of home in terms of my parents' home'. He lived on his own, and was renovating his house, and in doing so believed he was 'aiming towards making a home - I'm trying to reproduce a similar atmosphere (to his parents' home)'. So although he did not have a family in terms of wife and children, he did think of home in terms of his family of origin.

The association with *family* was a common response, and one of

three factors that could be seen as reflecting a **traditional and conservative** (post Industrial Revolution) **image of the home**; the other two being that it was a specific *place* and that it was associated with *rest and retreat*.

'Family' was taken as including spouse/partner, children, and parents. The two women with young children, the videotext editor (2) and the scientific editor (7), gave 'family' a prominent place in their response; for the former that was what it meant for her; the latter said that 'you become much more home-centred' after having children. The publisher (3), with teenagers at home, said home was 'the centre of family activities'. The same was true of the two men who took most of the responsibility for their young sons; the printer (17) and the patent agent (19) both said it was where one lived with one's family.

Family, in terms of children, was also mentioned by some of the older respondents who no longer had any at home; the translator (9) saw home as 'the heart of the family', and the technical author (18) said that for him 'home says wife and children'. The careers consultant (5) said:

'I think in my memory of course it has a very core part of family life; and although none of my youngsters actually sleep under the roof, they come back pretty frequently.'

A link between home, family and children was acknowledged by

three who did not have children. The manager of the band said:

'I think the general idea of home tends to include the emotion of the family, and I'm not anti-family but I'm not particularly interested or bothered by the fact that I don't have much of a family. So my family, such as it is, is my band. And I do think most people's notion of what the home is is the family, the husband, the wife, the kids, or whatever. And that's not mine at all.'

The researcher (20) said that when he was younger 'home' had meant 'getting married, buying a house, having a family, and working for someone else'; and the chiropodist said that her idea of home was wherever she and her husband were, adding, 'it isn't quite the same thing, perhaps, as someone who has children'. So the association between home and family was acknowledged in these cases. On the other hand, it was not mentioned by three of the women who had teenagers still based at home (4, 6 and 10) or one man who had a young child at home (13).

The second strand in this conventional image of home was the idea that home was a specific *place or house* in which one 'lived' (a term used by the majority of the group). The most effusive example came from the journalist (1): 'Oh, a divine place - it's where I live'; more typical was the technical editor's 'we like our home' (17). In some cases this was qualified by the notion that it should be fairly permanent, with comparisons being made with student and flat-renting days.

Nearly half thought of their own house as their 'ideal' of home (Q23); of those who did not, it was for reasons of space, convenience or the desire to be in the country or have more 'green' around them.

Finally, the third strand of the traditional image was made up of four related qualities: that it was *safe, relaxed, comfortable* and/or a retreat. The videotext editor (2) said it was 'where you feel relaxed', and the publisher (3) described it as 'a refuge from the outside world ... where you can relax'. For the enameller (4) it was 'a cocoon, comfort', similar to the careers consultant's 'nest' (5) and the antenatal teacher's 'bolt hole, where you feel most relaxed' (10). The scientific editor (7) said simply, 'somewhere where you feel comfortable and where you're relaxed, mostly.' The men's responses were perhaps less evocative and more pragmatic, nevertheless representing the same idea. For the manager of the band (11) it was 'somewhere where I can lock the door and shut the world out'. Three others used the word 'safe'; the computer journalist (12) and the copywriter (13) both described it as a 'safe place', and the management consultant (15) as a 'safe haven' where he could 'hide away'. Finally, for the researcher and writer (20) it meant 'comfort'.

Two of the women added a distinctive quality to this when they referred to the home as a 'warm idea' (8) or as associated with 'warmth ... understanding, acceptance' (9).

When later asked how relevant, to them, was the idea of home as

a place of rest or retreat (Q24), three quarters responded positively. Three were very positive: 'Totally, I close up into my little home like a snail' (1); 'Absolutely, yes' (11); 'Oh, very much so - I shut the front door if things happen, if there's been any hassle' (9). The printer (17) also liked to 'lock the door'. Others put a slightly different slant on it, as when the publisher (3) said, 'I think it's very relevant. In fact, I know my husband regards it that way. ... He regards home as a refuge'. She added that they were both 'usually quite happy to be here rather than to always be going out'.

The patent agent (19) also thought of it as a 'refuge', and he said he always liked to get back home. The illustrator (6) referred to it as a 'sanctuary', but she also made the point that she 'retreated to' her studio, where she enjoyed working. The management consultant thought that a home needed to be a place of rest or retreat, otherwise 'it's not serving the function of a home'.

Of the negative responses to the idea of home as a rest or retreat, three responses - from the chiropodist (8), the computer journalist (12), and the copywriter (13) - gave work as the reason. The computer journalist said, 'I can never put things totally behind me, because I'm here', and the copywriter said, 'when you come home you have to work - so it's the other way around, in fact, going out is a rest'. For the chiropodist the problem was the telephone (a problem the printer had solved by 'pulling the plugs' in the evening). For the careers consultant

(5) the idea of rest and retreat was not relevant because 'it's more active than that'; although she added that it had been relevant for her husband, from whom she was now divorced. And for the videotext editor (2), 'it's very difficult retreating to a place where there are children'. Finally, the scientific editor (7) said that home was more of a retreat and place of rest in the past, when she had no children and was commuting to work; again, 'the trouble with working at home is that you never get away from it'. Where the idea of home as a place of rest or retreat was qualified, therefore, it was for reasons to do with the family or work.

The overall impression, however, was that a fairly traditional idea of home had been retained; one that associated home with family, a specific place, and a place of rest and retreat from the outside world; 'to comfort and purify, to give relief and privacy from the cares of the world' (Burnett 1986:98 - quoted in Chapter 2). The emphasis in the original 'bourgeois ideal' was on respectability, and on what Voysey had referred to as 'reverence for nature', rather than on materialism or commercialism.

But there were elements in the responses of those interviewed that suggested a meaning of home that was not conventional in this traditional and conservative sense, but was more to do with the home being the *place of work*. This was more reminiscent of Quiney's 'industrious home', the house being also the workplace, which was common in England 'until even a hundred years ago'



(Quiney 1986:56). These additional elements in the group's definition were evident in a further three categories of response: the first represented the idea of home as a *base*; the second, that it was somewhere where one had *autonomy*; and the third was that it was specifically associated with *work*.

First, the idea of home as a *base* was referred to specifically a number of times: 'I would say that home was probably somewhere that I regard as settled - a permanent base' (6); 'I think once you own your own home you become much more conscious of it, as your own base' (7); 'I see it as my base, from which I can explore all sorts of possibilities' (8); 'I guess it's the place from which you're based' (11); 'it's a safe place I suppose, a base of operations, not just a place to relax' (12); 'It's a base. You know, it's where everything ... I always felt that, going to work, you're going away from your territory' (13); 'Basically somewhere I function from workwise as a base' (15). The idea of base was implicit in another comment: 'where everyone comes back to' (3). There were different connotations amongst these comments, with the idea of a base referring to a sense of permanence, and again perhaps a sense of belonging and security, but a strong sense of association with work was also evident.

Second, the association of home with *autonomy* - self-government, personal freedom and/or independence - was sometimes expressed in proprietorial terms of being on one's own ground. The journalist (1) said of her home, 'this is my republic, and I'm the emperor.' The copywriter (13) described it as his

'territory', and the management consultant (15) said that he would set up any home he lived in 'so that it feels as though it belongs to me - the place where I'm known to be at, that's mine.' The implication was that they were in control of the space, and this was taken a stage further by the researcher (20) who associated home with 'non-supervision'. The publisher (3) echoed this point: 'where you can do what you want to do'. The idea of self-government was implicit here.

Close to this was the feeling that one could *be oneself* - the personal freedom of autonomy - expressed in two forms: *not having to act a role*, on the one hand; and the idea of home as something one could *identify with or belong to*, on the other. Examples of the first were: 'I can be me' (5); 'people accepting you' (9); 'where you don't have to pretend or be high powered. It's a place where you can be yourself' (10). And the chiropodist (8) seemed to be implying the same thing when she said of her present occupation, 'What I'm like as a person, up to a point, doesn't matter quite so much.' She was making the comparison with her previous work as a teacher, which she had found personally very demanding.

The idea of home being something which one could identify with, or belong to, came through in comments such as: 'where I am, where I relate to' (4); 'where you have your being' (13); 'a me place' (15); 'a place where you belong' (16). There was also the idea of home as the focus of identity: 'this is my whole life ... it's my entire centre' (1); 'it's my focal point' (4).

There was an implicit association with work in these first two categories, *base* and *autonomy*; the third category was made up of examples where this association between home and work was expressed explicitly. The scientific editor (7) said simply, 'in my case, where you work as well', and the copywriter (13), 'It's security, working from home, somehow'. The chiropodist/stress therapist's first response to 'the meaning of home' was an association with her work: 'The surgery, hypnotherapy' (8), and the journalist's response implied much the same, 'everything happens here, we do interviews here, and we negotiate here' (1). The researcher's reference to 'non-supervision' could be included here also. The computer journalist said, 'I don't feel there's any great distinction between where one works and where one lives - where one spends one's leisure time' (12). On the other hand, he did have one room, his office, dedicated to work.

Others brought out this distinction between dedicated work areas and the rest of the house in their responses. The publisher (3), for example, made a clear distinction:

'because I have my office in a separate part of home, I consider going downstairs with the family is going home - almost like any office.'

The illustrator (6) made a similar distinction when she said, 'So that when I stop working I can just flop, read, have a bath ... I come out - the studio is where I work.' The chiropodist (8) made the comparison with her previous circumstances:

'Whereas before home meant a place to get away from

work, now it's a place where work's integrated, but I still make sure I keep work on the ground floor and not interfering with upstairs where we live.'

The manager of the band (11) said much the same in relation to the meaning of home:

'There's one room in this house where I work, which is good, and when I go in there I'm at work, and when I'm out of there I'm not.'

A later question (Q77) asked whether the work space was thought of as part of home or as part of the world of work. There was an interesting gender variation; whereas all the women said they thought of it as part of the home, six of the ten men said they thought of it as part of the world of work.

In summary, the difficulty encountered in defining the concept of home revealed the way in which it has ceased to be questioned, and has been taken for granted. The definitions and meanings that emerged broadly retained a traditional, conservative (post Industrial Revolution) idea of home in terms of the *family*, a specific *place*, and *rest and retreat* from the outside world. But they also reflected themes that were related to using the home as the place of work. These were the association with *autonomy*, the idea of home as a *base*, and with work as such. It was a positive image of home that was presented, in which home and work were compatible. It could be described as an **amended (or reconstructed)** image of home.

When asked if they thought their idea of home was fairly

'conventional' or whether they thought it differed in some way from the general idea of home (Q7), over half said they thought theirs was conventional. This was not a very satisfactory way of approaching a comparison between their own idea of home and the idea they believed the general public had. It produced some contradictory responses, indicating that it was to a large extent a relative term; but this was of some interest in itself.

Two responses (4 and 6) were little more than an affirmation that the respondents believed their view to be conventional; and a third, the patent agent (19), believed his idea of home was 'almost Victorian'. But some respondents indicated that their idea of home was conventional for people who worked from home. The journalist (1), having made this point, explained:

'I don't know any person in a job - I don't think it's the perception of an employed person.'

The publisher (3) at first said she thought hers was fairly conventional but added:

'Obviously the majority of people don't think of home, work and family as closely knit as I do from my background.'

She was alluding to the fact that she not only worked from home herself but came from a farming background where home, work and family were one. The computer designer (14) made a similar point when he said that he thought his was a fairly conventional idea 'within my area of knowledge of other people's views', to which he added, 'my father was a house-master so he worked from home'. The medical journalist (16) said he did not know, but added 'our

friends think alike ... home is where you have friends'. So it seemed that whether one considered oneself conventional or not could depend on one's reference group.

The chiropodist (8) associated her transition from feeling unconventional to feeling conventional with the fact that she had moved house - from what was apparently a retirement area to a more supportive one where 'others around are working from home'. The computer designer (14) said that there were few 'ordinary run of the mill ... nine to fivers' where he lived, but believed that:

'if I lived in the suburbs, where everyone left the house at eight to get the eight fifteen train into the city, I might stick out like a sore thumb.'

The translator (9) made a contrast, but in generational terms; she said, 'it depends what you mean by conventional'. It had always been important to her that she worked, but she had had to fit this around the expectation that she run the home in a traditional sense. She said she had to 'struggle towards' her 'own identity', whereas her daughter had been able to concentrate on her career.

Some believed that working from home had given them an idea of home that was *unconventional*. The scientific editor (7) said hers was,

'a bit different, because I'm working from home - it becomes your place of work as well.'

Similarly, the computer journalist (12) said of his idea of home that, 'it still is different'; he continued:

'People working from home are still the minority in this neighbourhood. So my ideas are a bit different.'

Two of the men who did not have a family (11 and 15) believed their idea of home was less than entirely conventional for this reason. This was in contrast with others who believed that their ideas were a bit different because they thought a house should be 'lived in', rather than immaculate and/or passive. The copywriter thought his idea of home was 'broadly similar' to what he took to be a general view, adding:

'except that some spend their life redecorating ... I like it to be clean but lived in, where we can do whatever we want to do.'

The technical author (18) said he had 'no idea really', that home was personal and that he took it for granted. But later he made the comparison between the 'permanent state of happy chaos' in which he and his wife lived and the 'sterile homes, as they're called, where everything is polished, and there's not a book in sight.' For him this was 'the antithesis of home'.

The videotext editor (2) again initially said that her idea was 'very conventional', but later compared her own home with what she saw as 'very restrictive' homes, where no mess was allowed. Her own idea of home seemed to be linked partly to the fact that she had a young family. Similarly, the careers consultant (5) believed she 'probably put more weight on it than a lot of

people' because she was Jewish, so the family was very important; she had earlier described it as an 'active, energetic, energising place'.

These responses suggested a realisation on the part of the respondents that their image of home - an *amended or reconstructed image of home*, incorporating work - differed in certain respects from a more traditional idea of home; but that whether it was considered 'conventional' or not depended on who they compared themselves with, and where they lived.

It was an awareness of how others might see them that contributed to another, less positive, side to the picture, associated with being seen as 'at home'. This contrasted significantly with their own idea of home which was generally both positive and compatible with work.

## 2 The problem with being 'at home': loss of legitimacy

One of the most revealing questions turned out to be one that asked what they believed people outside thought they were doing when they were at home (Q14). There was a striking gender difference in the pattern of answers that emerged, and these suggested experiences that could be described as *equal but opposite* between the genders. It was equal in terms of the frustration and ambiguity that can be experienced in relation to being seen as 'at home', and opposite in terms of the way in which socially constructed assumptions appear to operate to produce this effect. In both cases there was a tendency to



experience *loss of legitimacy*.

The most common response given by the women was that they believed other people, particularly those who were employed full-time, saw them as either doing nothing serious or as indulged in some sense because they were at home. The directory publisher (3), for example, said that when she was feeling low, and having a 'bad' period in terms of work, she felt that her friends 'who are working (that is, employed) full-time probably think I'm messing around'. The journalist (1) responded immediately with, 'employed people think you're just pissing about; self-employed people know you're working'. She went on to say:

'Sometimes a self-employed friend will ring up and say "How are you?", and I'll say "I'm fine, I made stacks of money on Monday and Tuesday and I'm lying in bed at four o'clock in the afternoon reading a novel", and they understand completely'

The video-text editor (2) felt that other mothers, for example, imagined she was 'sitting around doing nothing - friends know but I don't think they can imagine it'. Similarly, the enameller (4) said, 'Oh, playing - people who aren't in the same business think I'm slightly strange, just at home and therefore available'. She described how neighbours might ask her to give help, run errands and so forth; 'Well, I'm home anyway, could I "just look in on so-and-so's mother" - you know, that sort of thing'. The scientific editor (7) found that although some of her friends realised she 'had her head down' and was working, her children's school made the assumption that because she was apparently at

home she was doing nothing and was therefore available. She found that the headmistress frowned on mothers who did not help with swimming, for example; she said, 'I don't think she's really twigged that although I'm at home, I'm not available to do a lot of extra things.' Later she said,

'when they begin to realise is when I come in and give them a whole string of phone numbers of places where I might be contacted ... that sort of got it across to them.'

Two of those who lived outside London - the graphic artist (6) and the ante-natal teacher (10) - had what the former called 'visibly real work', and believed this made a difference. Her illustrations could be seen in book shops and sometimes on television, and she found that this had 'more status outside the book world than in it'; but she had still found it necessary to 'train one's friends not to intrude during working hours - and respect "work privacy"'. She found that after she had been 'brisk' once or twice people were 'pretty good'. It had been more difficult when her children were young:

'I was also doing mutual child care with other women's kids then (and) I remember it being quite hard to get friends to respect my work time ... and I do remember finding it difficult to be assertive.'

The ante-natal teacher was again well known in the area, so 'people outside know I'm teaching parents' and would see them coming and going. Some seemed to think she was 'running classes all the time', and did not realise she wrote articles - although

she found that people were more impressed by the fact that she wrote, when they did know.

The careers consultant noted that it might be different if her work were more visible, 'if I were making something concrete ... When I'm working at home, there's nothing really for them to see'. She was therefore 'a bit of a mystery', and she believed this was because of the link with psychology: 'I should have a black cat and crystal ball'. She said this was true of her neighbours until she was able to help a neighbour's daughter get into college:

'suddenly she (the neighbour's daughter) found that I had lots of books and ideas, and suggestions which actually did get her into college. And suddenly it all became much more real - it began to make more sense to them'.

The chiropodist/stress therapist's occupations were evident for all to see to the extent that she had a board outside her house; but, like the ante-natal teacher, she had at least two hats and found that people were consequently 'very confused'. This was apparently because she did not have just one work identity, or one job, as would be the case 'if I'd just said "I'm a social worker", or "a teacher"'. She explained:

'I used to think people disapproved because "how can you be a jack of all trades?", and "how can you do everything?" Then I thought well perhaps it's a cultural thing.'

On the other hand, she found it very easy to work from home in the less obviously residential area to which she had moved - having left a predominantly retirement area for that very reason. She explained that now, 'everyone's involved with their own lives - they're not interested in what I'm doing anyway'.

Finally, two of the women found that they were looked on with some envy, as having a relatively easy time. The translator said there had been comments about her being 'very lucky', having something she could market while staying at home; something she could do as and when she pleased. She commented, 'I don't know what they think I'm doing'. The antenatal teacher (10) said that people had commented, 'Oh, you have a lovely lifestyle'. And the directory publisher said that friends 'who are working full-time' (again, apparently meaning employed) or those who had to make a regular income, such as one-parent families she knew, 'probably think I'm onto an easy ride'. Sometimes she felt 'quite guilty about doing what I want'. Her income might vary throughout the year, and as previously mentioned some of the work she did would not generate immediate income but was an investment towards further business; for example, she believed her directory publications were now more 'professional' in appearance.

For the women, being at home was a problem because of the association with their traditional role *inside* the home, rarely considered serious work; women were expected to be 'at home' - and available. For *men* the problems were different, but again associated with a perceived traditional role. Most obviously men

working at home may be seen as not working, or as unemployed, apparently because men are assumed to work outside the home; they are not expected to be 'at home'. Two of the men exemplified this perception. First, the technical author (18) said that people he met socially had no idea what he did; 'they don't see how any normal man could possibly spend all day at home'. Second, the researcher (20) said he found that, 'people really don't think you have a job to do unless you go out and work for somebody'. A relative had said to him, 'I don't understand why you don't go out and get a job'.

Two of the men, the manager of the band (11) and the medical journalist (16), had planned their work environment carefully to provide a purpose-built office; but it was still within the home, so the reactions of others reflected the same assumptions. The former found that, 'people don't believe you have anything to do - because you're at home you must therefore be not busy'. He said this was one of the biggest problems he had to face initially. A friend had warned him and said to him:

'you will find that people will phone you up just because you're at home, and they won't have any sensitivity to the fact that you're actually in your office, or in your place of work, and they'll expect to be able to drop round and take your time, as if it were a weekend or whatever',

He found this to be true; he had had to 'educate' people, and this was also true of the medical journalist. He found that people would ask, 'Where do you work?', and when he pointed to

his office, they would say 'Really. What are you doing?' His neighbours were 'all out at work' during the week so they apparently found it difficult to comprehend - 'I suspect that some people wonder' - although 'other journalists don't find it strange'.

It was not surprising, therefore, that some responses suggested that the men were seen as really unemployed. The management consultant (15) said that people who knew he worked from home probably did not quite know what he did in terms of work; but of the people who he saw in the street he said, 'God knows what they think - they probably think I'm unemployed'. He said there were not many working from home in the area, unlike Notting Hill where he lived before. Two others, the copywriter (13) and the computer journalist (12), found that the problem arose with their respective wives' friends. The former said, 'I'm convinced they think I'm out of work, and we're all pretending, because I'm rarely working when they come round'; he usually tried to take time off in the afternoon to play with his small son but would work late into the evening. His clients did not come to his house so they had 'no perception' of him working from home. For the computer journalist the situation was similar; there was no problem as far as those he did work for were concerned, but his wife's friends had asked, for example, 'Doesn't he miss (his old firm)?' and 'How are you really getting on?' - again, as if they were perhaps pretending or covering up the real situation. He sensed the assumption that he was not really doing anything, and was therefore 'viewed as an object of pity', which clearly amused

him.

Children could apparently find the situation difficult to explain. The printer (17) discovered that his eight year old son told people 'Daddy doesn't work, he's at home'; perhaps one of the clearest indications that a very specific meaning of 'work' is acquired at an early stage as part of socialization. According to his father, the son 'couldn't quite grasp that I was working and earning a living' although he saw his father working every day in the holidays. He went on to say that 'a lot of people really don't know what I do', and he got 'strange looks' sometimes, for example when he went to the school to help coach cricket. His experience was very similar to that of the patent agent (19) whose ten year old son, also at prep. school, had told him that 'various people in his class couldn't understand how anyone could work at home; they can't envisage it'. This was despite the fact that he believed that half of the parents, 'from quite a mixture of professions', were not 'nine to five families' working regular hours away from home. Again, 'except for people who consult me professionally, I find nobody else has any idea what I'm doing'.

Finally, having more than one occupation again added to the confusion. The computer designer described how he sometimes went out dressed smartly for consultancy work, sometimes more casually for a maintenance job, and sometimes very scruffily when he was involved in the renovation to his house. He said his neighbours had told him that they thought he was an international drug

dealer, having further noticed that 'you seem to be at home at odd times of the day'. They were probably not serious and while he laughed as he recalled it, he was apparently an anomaly.

For the men the need to explain, sometimes to 'educate' friends and family about what they were doing could be as necessary as it was for women. Variations within this seemed to parallel those relating to the women: whether the other person was in a similar position, similar business and/or self-employed; whether the other person was someone for whom they did work; whether children and wives were involved and/or had to explain to others; the visibility of the work; whether the contact was face to face; what kind of area they lived in; and whether there was one clear occupation.

So for both the men and the women, working from home seemed to present a problem in terms of the assumptions and perceptions related to them being at home; friends and family could be 'educated', but this was not so easy in the case of other groups with whom they had less contact. The analysis so far suggested that the frustration - arising from the need to justify and explain - is equal but opposite between the genders. Responses to a further question, which asked whether they thought there was any difference in the way the work was seen when it was the opposite sex working at home (Q35), gave further support to this conclusion. Whether or not it was taken 'seriously' was found to be an important theme here, either explicitly or implicitly, again reflecting *legitimacy* - and the ability to justify, or not



having to justify.

Of the ten men, five said they thought it would be *more difficult* for a woman to have her work taken seriously. Two of these related this to the association with children. The copywriter (39) thought that 'If they're married, or married and have kids, then it's not viewed as seriously', and the management consultant (15) similarly thought that a woman with children would be at a disadvantage compared with a man working at home. The computer journalist (12) pointed directly to the 'stereotype that women are at home anyway' and believed this would operate against them; the printer (17), reflecting the point made by the women in the last section, said 'I think a lot of people think they're playing at it - that it's a hobby'. Finally, the researcher said he thought that a man was expected to be doing something 'more serious', and this was the phrase used by all the four women who believed that, from the point of view of the way it is viewed, it is more difficult for women to work at home. It was, they said, taken 'more seriously' if it was a man who was working at home. The chiropodist (8) did not enlarge on this but the publisher said that it would be thought that a man 'must be doing something'; the illustrator (6) said she thought men found it easier to be assertive. The enameller (4) qualified what she said by adding that if the woman's work was of high status - if, for example, she was a doctor - there might not be such a difference in perception.

From the opposite point of view, half the women believed that it

was more difficult for men. The journalist (1) said, 'I think a man has a harder job because a man who works from home is a "failure" in the eyes of the outside world. He is seen as not being able to get a job.' She thought they had a heavier load to bear, with the perception being, 'Oh, they're a househusband - there must be something wrong with them - sissy'; whereas women are expected to be at home. Again, it was thought they could be seen as unemployed. The publisher (3) said that when her husband (who also worked at home some of the time) went to the school other parents had wondered if he was unemployed; and the translator (9) thought that there was more suspicion of men working from home 'especially because there are so many redundancies and they tend to think he's had to do it - which may not be true - whereas a woman has chosen to do it'.

The response of two other women emphasised the way in which they believed men's work was associated with a workplace outside the home. The careers counsellor (5) said that whereas a woman could work at home without having to be 'coming from or going to a job', men were more likely to see it as a 'stepping stone between jobs'. This meant that 'a woman can perhaps gain on this one'. The antenatal teacher (10) thought that although it would make little difference to her if she moved into an outside premises, a man 'working in a back room' might be taken less seriously so it would be more important.

Following closely from these last responses, two of the men - the technical author (18) and the patent agent (19) - thought that

it was 'more acceptable' for a woman to work at home. The former added that this was because most 'non-professional women' were 'housewives' and therefore worked at home anyway. The patent agent pointed to the 'traditional image of the man as breadwinner who goes out to work'.

The remaining five responses to Question 35 suggested there was little difference in the way work done at home is seen, whether it was a man or a woman working there. But overall there were indications that positive and negative factors were operating differentially for the men and the women; that there was an interaction between gender and the perception of being 'at home'.

But it also seemed that they felt loss of legitimacy arising specifically from being seen as 'at home' was roughly equal in degree for the women and the men in the group. They were asked whether they believed there was an association; whether they thought their work would be viewed differently if they did not do it at home but in a place of work (Q55). They were also asked, later in the interview, whether they believed their credibility, legitimacy, etc. would be more if they were not at home (Q83); these responses were also taken into account.

Of the twenty, fourteen said that they believed that their work would be seen differently, and more positively, if they worked in a more conventional place. Again it was suggested that it would be taken 'more seriously' suggesting that it would have greater *legitimacy* if it were not done at home. This point was

made by the videotext editor (20), the manager of the band (11) and the researcher (20), although the latter added that it depended who he was dealing with. The manager of the band added that when he answered the telephone himself (that is, when it was evident he did not have a secretary) this would 'raise a question' in people's minds. The patent agent (19), observed that,

'if you work in the company hierarchy, as I did, then to be a senior manager you get a lot of status within the whole group.'

He further observed that 'professionals' had traditionally worked from home on the other hand.

Others referred to *prestige* or *image*. The careers consultant (5) said she thought it would have a 'more prestigious image', but added that it would involve her in charging a great deal more. And the scientific editor (7) said that although it was not relevant as far as those she worked for were concerned, she believed that for the general public 'it probably carries a bit more prestige if you actually go out to work every day'. The copywriter (13) said it would help his 'image', but that it was not important to him as freelancing was recognised within the business. But he also mentioned the telephone, and the 'loss of credibility' he sensed if his young child could be heard in the background. The antenatal teacher (10) thought that 'a practice with a brass plate on the door' might make a difference, but that she depended largely on reputation now that she had been doing it for so long. The importance of being established was implied

in the response of the printer (17) when he said that it might influence 'potential clients', and he usually avoided saying he worked from home until he had a firm contract.

Finally, the publisher (3) believed that her work would be seen 'more as a *business*' if there were 'proper business hours', but again she was hardly ever face to face; and the medical journalist (16) thought that an 'office up the road' might be viewed differently, as 'more *professional*', but like the careers consultant he believed that some customers might then see him as 'too expensive'.

If, as has been suggested, working from home and keeping overheads down was a major consideration in the decision to become self-employed, and to use the home as a place of work, the fact of being seen as *independent* and *self-employed* could in turn be an advantage. Four of the group (two of the women and two of the men) said that it could carry greater status than being employed by an outside organisation. The chiropodist (8) was quite clear on this point, and said that the NHS chiropody had 'low status', so to work for it would have had less status than being 'private' as she was - although her own training and qualifications were not as rigorous as those required for the NHS. For the translator (9) the comparison was between doing translation work on her own account and being paid for it as such, and working as she did before when her translation work was 'taken for granted' as just one of her responsibilities; it was now seen 'in its own right'. Apparently comparing her previous

employers with those she now worked for directly, she said 'the less educated think it's easy; the better educated person values what you do'. The computer journalist (12) said that it operated 'possibly to the advantage of the freelance', as it was easier for a publisher to 'spike' an article done by an 'in-house' person: 'freelancers don't have people telling them what to do'. Lastly, the technical author (18) made much the same point that, 'as a full-time permanent staff technical author you don't have the same cache as the outside consultant. He's the hack, the guy who's in there ... so I'm in a better position.'

So for these four being self-employed was believed to give them an advantage.

On the other hand, three of the four worked in such a way that it would not have been obvious to those they worked for that they were home-based, although it would have been obvious that they were independent. The translator (9), the computer journalist (12) and the technical author (18) did not have clients to their house, and the chiropodist's house had begun to take on more of the identity of a surgery. Furthermore, it was noted earlier that some respondents used an outside name for marketing their product or services, but they were still self-employed. The computer designer (14) was using an outside company's name to market his product, to avoid any impression that it was made, in his words, 'in the kitchen' (perhaps with the connotation of being 'home-made'); the management consultant (15) used an outside name for establishing contacts; the scientific editor (7)

sometimes chose to link her name to known publishers; and the medical journalist (16) said that a lot of people knew him from his time 'in the employed world' and he was able to use these contacts.

But for a further two respondents being home based seemed to make no difference. These were the enameller (4) and the illustrator (6). Their work, associated as it was with art and craft, seemed to be viewed differently from work that provided a service; they both said it made no difference where they did it as it was the end-product that mattered. This may have been true to a lesser extent for those in the writing occupations; the copywriter said that 'freelancing' was 'recognised within the business', seeming to imply that working independently was understood, and it did not matter where the work was done. On the other hand, he also chose to visit clients when necessary rather than have them come to his house.

It seemed, therefore, that despite their own positive image of home incorporating work within it, and notwithstanding strategies such as seeing people away from home, making the house look less like a home, and association with an outside name, being seen as 'at home' was felt to reflect negatively on the way their work was viewed. If, as was argued in chapter 3, legitimacy depends on conformity to what Weber called the 'legitimate order', then being seen as 'at home' can be said to contravene the legitimate order. The legitimacy of the home is associated with respectability, conservatism and discretion, rather than

progress, rationality and modernity. It is associated with the *symbolic interactional* (culture related) rather than the *purposive rational* (work related) which dominates in a modern world (Habermas, 1971).

The Oxford English Dictionary gives four definitions of 'at home': first, it is 'one's house'; second, 'one's neighbourhood, town or country'; third, 'at one's ease, as if in one's own home, in one's element'; fourth, it is 'conventionally understood' as meaning 'accessible to callers, prepared to receive visitors'. These definitions carry with them heavily loaded connotations that reflect the socio-historical construction and use of the term. The associations with a (private) place of comfort and with availability were here, and help to explain why it was a problematic term for a group who were working 'at home'. It was not surprising, therefore, to find evidence of attempts to avoid its use.

There were, not surprisingly, plenty of examples of a traditional use of 'at home' (and it should be noted that this phrase was used in the original interview questions - for example 'working at home' - as its significance was not recognised initially). Examples were: 'I always feel good at home' (1); 'When I first started working at home' (3). Some of the examples seemed to reflect particularly on expectations concerning women: 'women who stay at home and make curtains ... I can't bear to be at home doing nothing' (8); 'But in our relationship (wife) couldn't stay at home' (17).



But more significant were the indications that it was problematic. For example: 'If you're at home - this old thing about being available for the postman and the milkman and everybody else' (2); 'A lot of people I'm sure think "couldn't you just do a favour", because after all you're just at home' (4); 'Just because I'm working at home ... it's not just being at home' (8); 'because you're at home you must therefore be not busy ... they don't recognise that you being at home is working' (11); 'My son sometimes thinks I don't work - "Daddy doesn't work, he's at home"' (17); 'They don't see how any normal man could possibly spend all day at home' (18). Some again reflected particularly on perceived expectations of women: 'They might assume if they heard my husband's computer downstairs that he is 'working', but I'm just "home"' (3); 'I think women at home are considered to be housewives' (4); 'I think they assume that if a woman's at home, you're a housewife' (7).

In order to counteract the problematic connotations of 'at home' that undermine legitimacy, a strategy appeared to be emerging; this was the use of an alternative to 'at home'. So, instead of 'working at home' they might refer to 'working from home'. The pilot interviews had given the slight impression that it might be the men who used this alternative more than women, and Hakim (1987) had suggested that it was predominantly men - sales representatives, artisans, etc. - who worked 'from home', while women worked predominantly 'at home', reinforcing the stereotypical 'feminized' image of being 'at home'. But it was

found that all those interviewed used 'from home'. The cartographer/printer (17), however, was the only one to use this term in the context of the problematic association with home: 'Sometimes if you say you're doing it from home, they think "ah, he's playing at it; I'm not going to get a job"'; and 'they don't think you're substantial if you're working from home'.

The second, and more surprising, alternative to 'at home' was 'at work'. If 'from home' had a less close association with home than 'at home', the phrase 'at work' was normally associated with being in a designated place of work completely dissociated from home. The possibility that it might be used in a home context had been noted during the pilots, and two questions specifically asked *if they used the term to describe to others what they were doing (Q40)*, and *if this was the way they thought of themselves (Q41)*. All the women, except the scientific editor (7), said they would use 'working from home' or just 'working', rather than 'at work'. Whereas the others associated it with being away from home, and the chiropodist thought only men would use it, the scientific editor said she had had to impress on the school that she was 'at work', and had had to tell her husband, 'well, I'm sorry but I'm at work'. Most of the men used it in its conventional sense - 'out at work' - but three of them referred to being 'at work', and one said he thought of himself as 'at work' though he would not use it. Examples from the three who used it were: 'When I go in there I'm at work and when I'm out of there I'm not' (11); 'Yes, sit down and switch on and I'm at work' (13); 'I said "you must realise that during the day I'm not

at home, I'm at work" (16); 'So I am at work, I'm working, but I'm not "at work" - er, it's funny that, I hadn't thought about it' (18). This last response suggests an ambiguity in a term that may be undergoing a change in its use and therefore meaning.

The use of the term 'at work', like the use of the term 'from home' appeared to be a strategy - conscious or otherwise - of avoiding the use of 'at home'. For an articulate group, aware of how they presented themselves and their work, the meanings of the words they used could be important, and 'at home' was perhaps gradually being rejected in order to counteract the threat to legitimacy it carried with it.

## **B. WORK**

The preliminary analysis in chapter 6 had concluded that their work was very important to those interviewed, and that they particularly valued the *autonomy* they had. It was also clear from section A, above, that there was an awareness that in working the way they did they were not conforming to the dominant 'normative order'. But how did their perception of 'work' compare with what they believed to be the general public's idea of serious, and therefore legitimate, work? There were already indications of a tension between the two.

### 1 A broad definition of (autonomous) work

When asked for their definition of work, and what it meant to them, the most frequent themes to be found within the responses

focused on *remuneration* and *enjoyment* (eleven and twelve mentions, respectively). Then there was a cluster of factors mentioned from five to seven times. These included: supporting work; unpaid work; pride in work; things that have to be done; part of one's identity; and the idea of a 'broader' definition than the public image.

Of the responses associated with the need to *earn a living*, half the women and seven of the men mentioned the necessity to earn a living as such. But two of the women who did not mention it (the journalist and the enameller) had said that they depended on their own income with little or no help from elsewhere; and again the income of the illustrator and the chiropodist was important in real terms but not mentioned.

Other responses were associated less directly with the need to earn a living; and reflected on the need to take responsibility for the work from beginning to end, and maintain a high standard. For example, work that could be described as *supportive* of, or a *back-up* to, the main work - though not directly paid for - was included as work. Sometimes it could be tasks that were clearly related to the paid work, for example 'doing the VAT, accounts, etc.' mentioned by the management consultant (15). But it might also be an investment towards future income; the publisher (3) reflected on this:

'I can see the results of things I did maybe a year ago and there was nothing at the time, just spending out money. Now I can see that it takes a long time

for things to work through the system and you do eventually get the results because you feel more secure that the things that you are working at now - that are not actually immediately bringing in money - are not future - that actually if you think they're relevant they probably are.'

The support work might not look like work at all, but was considered work by respondents. For example, the enameller (4) acknowledged that 'few people would consider going to a gallery and looking at pictures could ever be considered work'. But she related it to her work as an artist; and similarly, 'when I'm doing the pictures which I don't sell very well, I consider that work as well.' A similar example was the work of the manager of the band (11):

'People might see me watching videos or listening to the radio or to records, and wouldn't understand that I was actually working - because I might be trying to listen to a certain record producer and try and find out if he would be right for something we were doing.'

Finally, the computer journalist (12) described how he would be, 'reading things up and about to write something; or even turning ideas over in my mind for certain articles in the future. That's all work.'

So, for him, thinking was 'part of work', and it continued over what appeared to be breaks. The medical journalist (16) made the additional point that this kind of activity was essential for a journalist in order to 'keep up to date'. The patent agent (19) had made the similar point in terms of thinking while walking the

dog; and the two who could be said to be involved in design, the illustrator (6) and the cartographer/printer (17), talked of the amount of thought that went into their work.

But, apart from activities that were directly or indirectly part of the necessity to earn a living, work that was not paid for was identified separately, but was still included as work. This unpaid work might nevertheless be associated with the paid work, or in some way subsidised by it. Sometimes the unpaid work was referred to in general terms, sometimes more specifically.

General references were made by, for example, the translator (9) who said that work did not have to be paid for, 'but it helps - there is an incentive there', and the patent agent (19), who said he would include unpaid work:

'I would look at it as what I'm paid to do, although you can have it where you're effectively giving a donation, you're giving your time to someone'.

The printer/cartographer (17) said that a particular job could be 'buckshee', and 'we do other jobs cheap because we want them'. This seemed to be partly because he enjoyed the work: 'If I didn't have to earn money, I'd do it for nothing'. And the time he gave as an adviser to others thinking of setting up on their own from home would perhaps have been referred to as consultancy if it had been paid for.

The management consultant (15) used the term 'cross-subsidy' to refer to 'doing some work for a voluntary organisation'; it was

'still work' but would have been subsidised by his paid work. This was in contrast to the technical author (18) who did not include the work he did for the RNIB as work; the copywriter (13) commented that 'people don't value voluntary work'.

Of the women, the antenatal teacher had said that some of her work was 'paid either directly or indirectly', but some of it seemed to be done for no payment (for example accompanying mothers to the hospital if there was no partner available). The publisher (3) and the illustrator (6) gave fairly straightforward responses. The former said:

'Although I now see more overflow between work that you do for money, work that you do that might possibly bring in money, work that you do as a voluntary worker because you want to - it's still work.'

She was involved in supporting the local interest groups in various ways; and the illustrator responded when asked what work meant to her:

'My work. A mixture of things I'm paid for, and things I'm not paid for.'

She was often asked to do things locally, and said she was more selective in what she agreed to do than in the past.

Both these women, the publisher and the illustrator, included being a mother in the context of work that was not paid for, as did the videotext editor (2). The publisher, who had teenage children, said that when her children were young she 'didn't feel that being a full-time mother was proper work', but now when she

saw harassed mothers she would 'feel like saying "you're doing a really good job, don't worry"; it's work, it's proper work'. The illustrator, also with older children, having said that work did not have to be paid for, continued, 'I could only list the things I would say "these are work" ... housework is work, bringing up children is work, definitely'. The videotext editor, who still had young children said that she had 'a thing about motherhood being unrecognised'; she also included it as serious work.

But, apart from those responses that were in some way to do with remuneration - work identified as paid for or by the fact that it was not paid for - another main theme was more personal and expressive. Together with the central idea of *enjoyment*, there were the related notions of *identity* and *pride*.

The frequency with which *enjoyment* - or some variation on this - was expressed indicated that there was a good deal of personal satisfaction and/or self-fulfilment involved in what work meant to them.

In some cases a comparison was made with previous employment, for example the publisher (3) said:

'I started to be a clock watcher (in her previous employment). And I think that's one of the things that influenced me to want to work for myself because I knew that whatever you did, if you had to do it, it



could become drudgery - which is the worst definition of work. Now I am very positive - generally I have a very positive attitude to work.'

Earlier she said of the meaning of work for her, that she experienced the same tasks differently now:

'It's got different images I suppose - can have the connotation of being something not very pleasant, because you have to do it. I lost that, generally, as far as working for myself because I do enjoy it. And even things that are boring, like typing out labels - if I was doing that in an office for someone else I would consider that really work because it would be dull and horrible. But when I'm doing it here for myself, that same job isn't - it's just a nice relaxing thing. So it's work but it's not drudgery.'

The enameller (4) also made a comparison with previous employment as a librarian, and said of what work meant for her:

'Self-respect, pleasure. When I worked in the second library there was no pleasure, there was no joy. There was just money at the end of it. But this work is wound up with my feelings about myself and who I am, and what I am, and so on.'

Two other examples from the women indicated the link with *identity*. The chiropodist (8) said of her definition of work:

'I have this argument with my husband; he says it's just to earn money, and I say rubbish, it's got to be fulfilling as well. So a definition of work must involve fulfilment. It must also involve financial

reward, for me at the moment.

She went on to say that it also meant independence, and that it fitted in with her concept of herself as a 'doer'. Of the meaning it had for her she said:

'Enjoyment, I think. Exhaustion as well; utter exhaustion sometimes, mental and physical. But I'm hoping that connotation will change. It's nice to be exhausted sometimes as well.'

The translator (9) emphasised identity and said of what work meant to her:

'Well, intellectual stimulus, interest, individuality - your own personality is bound up; if you have no work do you have an identity?'

The antenatal teacher (10), asked what work meant to her, reflected on her own enjoyment and the connotation of obligation that is associated with it nevertheless:

'Well, I enjoy my work, but a lot of people don't. And I think one of the connotations I have of work is that it is something that has to be done - it's obligatory, and is not done for pleasure. Now, for me, that's a fuzzy definition because I do a lot of things for pleasure and enjoyment which are actually part of my main occupations and are paid either directly or indirectly.'

Amongst the men, the computer journalist (12) seemed to indicate a new found enjoyment in work that was not there when he was employed. When asked for his definition of work, he said:

'You're doing something that has a monetary reward at the end of it - trouble is I rather enjoy my work.'

(He went on to talk about the press conferences he went to, as an example.)

Asked if he thought those who enjoyed their work 'would normally be outside a big firm' as he had seemed to imply, he replied:

'Oh, they would be I'm sure, yes.'

Again, following a line he had taken up earlier, he was asked if, however, those employed in a large organisation away from home would not normally be seen as having a serious job, he said:

'No, indeed; it's upside down really.'

On the other hand, the computer designer (14) - one of those who gave earning an income as his definition of work - also said in response to what work meant to him,

'I've always enjoyed the work that I've done, and I've always had free rein; I've never worked nine to five ... I've never had any problem with work at all.'

(This was despite the fact that he had mentioned elsewhere that he had had to work unacceptably long hours previously.)

The printer/cartographer made the comparison with doing 'just a job'. His definition of work was:

'Something you enjoy doing. I've always said that. ... We enjoy what we're doing. But mapping, cartography, was always a job and a hobby. It was never "just a job" - I could never do something that was just a job.'

He explained how he would 'overquote' for any work he did not

want, and that for him the meaning of work was 'something you enjoy - you've got to make something out of it.'

The researcher said that he thought that,

'most people who try it (working from home) - even if they don't make a fortune - enjoy it better than walking into work every morning; and the foreman or the chief clerk (who you don't always think is the best brain that was ever invented) is not going to bawl them out.'

Earlier he had said that, for him, work was not very different from 'just living'; a similar point made by the manager of the band (11) when he said it was 'just about everything I do'. What they seemed to be suggesting was that work was not separate for them, whether from home or any other part of their life, but was integrated.

Together with enjoyment, there were indications of pride in their work arising from these questions. The woman journalist (1) said that her work was 'something I take pride in but it's quite a hard slog'. The chiropodist (8), having noted that with the pressure of more patients it would be easy to become 'sloppy', said she had to 'set my own standards for myself ... with integrity - be true to yourself.' The computer designer (14), who was in his own words 'a perfectionist', said 'I do everything properly.' And the medical journalist (16) said,

'if you're not professional, and you send tatty material to the wrong people, they're not going to

view you as serious even though you think you are serious about it.'

The idea of being 'professional', as used here, was to do with setting high standards (and therefore having work taken seriously), and this was a concept that emerged more generally throughout the interviews, and is taken up later.

The emphasis on enjoyment, identity and pride indicated a sense of *personal autonomy* in terms of self-direction and taking responsibility for the work. There was an emphasis on what could be described as personally expressive - or quality of life - factors rather than on instrumental or materialistic ones; whereas 'earning a living' was often mentioned, making money as such (or making a surplus or profit) was rarely given priority. Theirs was a very diverse, and often personal, model that acknowledged few boundaries: between work and home; between work and non-work; between paid and unpaid; or in terms of time and space. This can be compared with the rational, Enlightenment approach of the stereotypical industrial model to be found in the 'modern' organisation - what became the legitimate model - epitomised by scientific management. The maintenance of boundaries was intrinsic to this model, and resulted in a much 'narrower' model, reflected in what was seen as the general public's view of serious work by this group - a model they had sometimes experienced in the past.

## 2 A narrow definition of (legitimate) work

There was a contrast between what constituted 'work' for the

group and what they saw as the 'general', or conventional, view of serious work (Q31). (The word 'serious' was not entirely satisfactory, but was a word that had been used by those interviewed, including those in the pilot interviews, to represent *legitimacy*.) Their perception of the latter amounted to a description of 'a job'.

The videotext editor (2) specifically used this term:

'I think most people think of it as a job, certainly paid work, probably with set hours - not necessarily nine to five but recognised hours, and generally working for an employer, or actually running a business.'

Variations on the idea of the job, amongst the women, were:

'I think probably the general public still considers proper work is what you go out and do nine to five, and you get a wage at the end of the week or the end of the month.' (3)

'Society's view? The society that Mrs Thatcher says doesn't exist? I suppose society's view of work is a paid activity that takes place outside the home, I don't agree with that definition myself.' (6)

'People tend to think of it as working for somebody else, going out to work. I think that's the conventional view; self-employment is probably a bit

different.' (7)

'Something you go out to do ... People tend to think it's less serious if you do it at home. One of the definitions of work might be that it is something that you have to do for a fixed length of time - for a fixed period of time; that you do between 8 and 6, with overtime. Or where you're not able to direct yourself.' (10)

What she was describing was a lack of autonomy.

One woman emphasised the link with men's work:

'A public stereotype seems to be that it is much more of a male oriented picture; that it is continuous, not fragmented like most women's work - that you do one thing at a time. Much more structured than perhaps a woman's experience. It sounds quite rigid doesn't it? And I think from a male point of view, it's out of the home.' (5)

Apart from this last perception, very similar responses were to be found amongst the men:

'Going out to work for somebody else in an office or factory.' (20)

'The public probably think of serious work as being sat at a desk, working on some papers or on the telephone; or alternatively in a factory - anything

where your attention is focused 100% on something for a period of time. ... I mean you pick up an attitude.' (11)

'I think it's what people are given to do by firms ... if someone goes 'to work', they are not doing what they want to do - they're doing what someone else wants them to do.' (12)

(An example was given of a local man who spent some time working very hard from home but was seen as going back 'to work' when he became employed outside again.)

'It would be narrower than (my definition), but I think largely because people would also see it in terms of employment - so that defines it immediately. So if you do something connected with your work, but outside your working hours then it probably isn't counted as work ... which could be talking with colleagues. It's narrower in the sense of being much more the work that is directly doing whatever your role requires you to do.' (15)

'People think you can't be very serious about doing a particular job unless you are in that place, or with that company, or in that role in that company.' (16)

'I think a lot of people think that serious work is going to the office, pushing paper from nine to five



and going home with a briefcase full.' (17)

'Oh, I think the public view of work is somewhere you go.' (18)

The recurring themes were to do with *structured employment outside the home* (that is, for a particular time, generally nine to five, and in a particular place, away from home). But if this was a description of *legitimate, rational, work* in the modern sense, there was the additional implication that it meant *loss of personal autonomy*.

But the *amount of remuneration* was also mentioned by others, and sometimes this involved the idea of making a lot of money, which had not been a feature of their own perception of work to *earn a living*:

'Again I think realities are rapidly changing because I still feel that 'serious' work somehow should bring financial benefits, but I'm beginning less and less to feel that way especially I think seeing my husband work at home, and knowing what he does isn't more interesting than what I do ... even if it is bringing in a lot more money.' (3)

'Well these days it seems to be people who are making a lot of money - which I find a bit depressing. I think we're getting more and more yuppies at hypnotherapy ... and they just seem to live for the

day, just to make enough money. That seems to be it. ... it doesn't matter how shitty it is - in moral terms - as long as you're making a lot of money. It's sort of monetarism, and a Thatcherist outlook I find ever so depressing.' (8)

'Oh I think paid work is what people think of as serious work. Probably full-time work, because they tend to think if it's part-time it isn't serious.' (9)

'Ah the public image of serious work - it's something which is well paid. It's something which has status.'  
(10)

Finally an element of *boredom* was suggested as characteristic of serious work:

'It represents something boring ... (mulls on the meaning of serious) ... But I think you should take work seriously ... I suppose bankers and things to do with money is serious work. Nobody really knows what journalists do.' (1)

'I would think that the public image would be something that you don't enjoy. There's a saying I've heard from many people, journalists and so on, "it beats working". So I think the popular view of what you do for work is what you don't enjoy.' (4)

This rather narrow image of work was perceived as the *legitimate*

image of work; work that was taken seriously by the general public.

That they were aware of the extent to which their own definition differed from this rather narrow image of work was confirmed when they were later asked whether, and how, they thought their own definition compared with what they believed to be the 'general view'. Overall, what they presented as their own definition of the meaning of work could be described as *broad*er than the representation they gave of the conventional image. The word '*broad*er' was only used, as such, by one respondent, but was implicit in the responses of others; and the belief that it was *different* was acknowledged.

Having said that he believed the general view was 'far too associated with employment', the management consultant (15) said that his view of it was 'much broader'. He said for him there were the two elements, 'the purely gainful bit and the other things that go in support of it'. The antenatal teacher (10) made a very similar point, without using the term broader:

'What constitutes serious work, to me, is a whole series of tasks which I have decided are part of my responsibilities if I choose to call myself a whatever. And I don't think other people see it in the same way.'

Others used terms that were in essence interchangeable with the notion of being broader. The woman journalist (1) said of her own attitude to work that she was 'a fanatic for efficiency', and

went on to say that hers was therefore 'a rather *fuller* picture than just sitting down at nine and finishing at five.' For her it was 'a twenty-four hour thing'. For the videotext editor, her own view of work was 'very much more *scattered*', which included being a mother. And the careers consultant (5) said of her view of work, '(it) has much more *flexibility*'; she thought 'others would call it fragmented'. She compared it with what she saw as the 'male oriented picture' that most people have.

The enameller said of her idea of work that it was 'totally different' from the general view as she saw it; but it was the men who were more likely to just say their perception was '*different*' from what they assumed was the general view. The manager of the band (11) believed that the general view of what constituted 'serious work' was 'very different' from his perception of serious work (Q33). The copywriter (13) said his was 'totally different', and the researcher/writer (20) said his was 'completely opposite in most respects', which he associated with other people being mainly 'employees of someone else'. The computer journalist (12) said his was the 'reverse' of the general view, and the printer (17) said that it was 'not my image'. The technical author (18) said his 'ideas have changed', and he seemed to have come from what was originally a very conventional view of work.

The response of the computer designer (14) and the patent agent (19) indicated the problems with the term 'serious'. The former said,

keep thinking.'

This has been quoted at some length because it seemed to illustrate the way in which this group of people felt that their views, which they considered equally valid, did not conform to the conventional view, which was the dominant view.

The conventional idea of work, as described here, was associated with bureaucracy and with organisations, and in this way carried the legitimacy of all that that means, including the rationality of the (liberal economic) market. For the modern world is, according to Giddens, the world of organisations, characterised by surveillance, specific 'work' locales, and a timetabled day. In Weber's terms, it is these features that represent the legitimate order. In contrast, the work of those who work independently from home is characterised by autonomy, 'high presence availability' (Giddens 1987:164), and flexibility in the use of space and time; they have crossed the boundary between home and work and therefore contravene the legitimate order. Their legitimacy is consequently threatened. Those in organisations - and therefore usually in a bureaucratic structure - are placed in impersonal positions and roles, which carry legitimacy; those who work from home see themselves as having a much more personal and autonomous quality to their work situation and their attitude to their work, as some of the quoted examples illustrate. They must rely on personal trust and reputation; they lack the legitimacy of the 'institutional order'. Increasingly there seemed to be what could be described as a trade-off between autonomy and legitimacy.

### C. WORK IDENTITY

Incidental comments had indicated that problems arising from working at home were not so much with those for whom the respondents worked, once a working relationship had been established, nor with those who worked in the same way or in the same field. Similarly family and friends, with whom they had direct contact, could be encouraged to respect their work. But what could be called the public perception, transmitted by those with whom they had less close contact (other parents, other children, schools, acquaintances, neighbours, partners' friends, those who were not self-employed and/or were in 'full-time jobs') seemed to be the problem. And this meant that the initial contact - the marketing of themselves and their work - could also be problematic, since potential clients or customers were part of 'the public' at that stage.

There were indications that the way the respondents saw themselves and their work was not at all the same as the way in which they believed the public saw them and their work. A clear contrast emerged between the identity they presented and the 'homeworker' image they firmly rejected.

#### 1 A positive, 'professional', identity

Sometimes the qualities they believed to be necessary for working the way they did were mentioned spontaneously; and one question specifically asked whether it was thought that there were any personal characteristics that were needed to work successfully at home (Q61). Responses suggested the qualities that they not

only believed to be necessary, but were clearly also those with which they identified.

There was a sense of self-reliance to be found amongst the responses. Most obviously there was an emphasis on the concepts of *self* and *discipline* - terms that can be associated with the autonomy they particularly valued. Secondary to these were the need to be able to: organise oneself, and/or maintain order; work alone, without needing others around; promote one's work and find markets; be confident and determined enough to recover from, and cope with, the downs and disappointments. The woman journalist was typically unequivocal about the qualities needed:

'Self-discipline, determination, self-belief - vital. You've got to believe you're the person who can do it. Sense of humour, spine of steel, resilience, efficiency. And talent - if you haven't got anything to offer, why would anybody bother to pay you.' (1)

At the other extreme, three of the women made fairly brief comments. The videotext editor (2) felt she needed to combine flexibility with a 'sense of order'; the enameller (4) pointed to the necessity to 'organise yourself and stick to it'; and the scientific editor (7) said simply that self-discipline was necessary, and that she enjoyed the 'imposed discipline of working to a deadline',

Other women again made a number of points. The publisher (3) described the way she worked as 'concentrated', and compared this

with previous employment:

'I am working on my own - I'm working for a solid hour - I'm not looking up and chatting for ten minutes to the woman sitting in the desk next to me, which I do remember doing at work.'

She thought home and work combined well if one was disciplined, and that 'working at home, for yourself, you have responsibilities to other people'; and she went on to say that she particularly felt this responsibility 'if things are going a little bit wrong'. When specifically asked about the qualities necessary, she responded,

'I think you have to generally feel confident that you've got something that you can do ... I guess some form of discipline - I certainly don't think everyone I know could do it ... you have to be able to promote yourself and what you're doing.'

The careers consultant's response to the same question was:

'I think it's important to have some time management ... not to be distracted by the flowers in the garden and the washing up and things like that. I think you have to be quite single-minded ... some people would say I'm bloody minded and I probably am quite single minded when once I actually get my teeth into something ... it would be quite problematical working for somebody else.' (5)

The illustrator (6) made similar points:

'People who need a lot of company all day are not going to survive. People who need to have their work



organised for them by other people are not going to be able to do it at home. ... You do need to be able to organise yourself, able to keep to it, yes, lots of self discipline, obviously ... I need the discipline of deadlines ... I think you probably need to be a bit more resourceful than average ... and not totally fazed when things go wrong because there isn't anybody to go to if there's a crisis; you've got to deal with it yourself.'

Like the careers consultant, she said she would always 'have to be in charge'. The need to be able to fall back on one's own resources was reflected in the response of the chiropodist (8) who said that, 'You've got to believe in yourself - if you don't no-one else will.' And in response to being asked specifically, she said:

'I think to be able to be alone and not to feel lonely. ... and another thing is to, all right, panic; but have a long-term optimistic view ... also to have a modicum of intelligence, to be able to plan.'

The ability to overcome the problems was again cited by the translator:

'I think you have to be fairly self-reliant. You have to be willing to accept that there will be some times when you won't have work, and you won't have money coming in ... I think you've got to be able to be self-motivated - you've got to be able to make yourself get up in the morning and do things and get on with the work. Dependency on other people is not

possible at all - you've got to do everything yourself. You've got to have a certain amount of self-confidence I think and be willing to go out and get the work.' (9)

Like others, the antenatal teacher (10) emphasised the need to be able to do the 'marketing' of the work, as well as coping with the ups and downs:

'I think perhaps you need to be ambitious, perhaps not personally (tape ended)... one of the problems of working at home in a freelance sort of way is that a lot of the time you have to chase the jobs yourself - you have to create the marketing side of it; you have to find your work. And I think there are swings and roundabouts. So you need to be persevering because you can easily be forgotten ... having said that, people come to me now (for classes); the writing I have to generate.'

The responses of the men were much the same. The manager of the band (11) said it was necessary to be 'phenomenally single-minded'; he added:

'And even though your office may be only five yards from where your bed is, there are always things you could be doing instead of working. So to be successful you have to be unbelievably self-motivated - much more so than you would expect, I think.'

He went on to say that he was motivated by the desire for 'a more sort of complete life'. The computer journalist (12) said it was

necessary to be 'self-driven', and again seemed to describe his own high level of motivation, despite poor time management:

'I do seem to be self-driven - I do seem to want to do things and have no difficulty in finding ideas.'

After giving a fairly flippant answer, saying that what was needed was, 'great strength of character, and the ability to plan, and all that stuff - none of which I have', the copywriter (13) answered more seriously. He said 'you can't be totally disorganised and you've got to be organised in some aspects of work'. He then went on to say:

'I mean obviously I needed experience of the various things I write about before I could go out and offer them to anybody, with the confidence that they wanted me to write about. And I would not have had the confidence six or seven years ago.'

The confidence of being able to do a good job, based on experience, was implicit in the response of the computer designer also:

'You've got to be able to work on your own, you've got to be self-motivated, and you've got to be fairly strong to cope with the downside of things, when things go wrong. I mean it's a tremendous advantage (relying just on yourself) because I can be really super efficient and I'm not dependent on someone to do it. .... At least I know that when it's done it's done as I want it to be done.' (14)

He added that he was not convinced that he was always right, but

had said elsewhere that he was a perfectionist, and took great pleasure in being able to say 'I did that'.

The management consultant (15) gave a much briefer response, emphasising self-discipline and the ability to maintain boundaries; but he added 'self-motivation - everything comes from that'. These same points were emphasised by the medical journalist (16). After saying that determination and a 'clear business attitude' were necessary, he went on:

'I think you also have to have self-discipline, being able to separate home from work, and being able to start work on Monday morning - and view yourself as going to work.'

The cartographer/printer (17) had found that 'the self-discipline is difficult when you first start.' And in response to being asked specifically what characteristics were needed, he said,

'Discipline. You've got to have that sense of discipline. ... I don't relate too well in crowds ... I don't need people around me, to be happy ... I'm certain of myself ... yes, I'm quite confident.'

Confidence was also mentioned by the technical author (18):

'I'm not particularly big-headed but I'm self-confident - I know I can do it. I'm pushy enough to keep at it even when the work goes slack.'

He also emphasised the need to be efficient, and that he liked to work on his own:

'I don't like the company of lots of other people ... and I've always been big-headed enough to think I can

work out my own salvation without needing to know what everybody else is doing.'

But the patent agent (19) implied that it was more than just confidence that was needed:

'You want to be very independent of thought and you also want quite a lot of courage. A lot of people just haven't got the guts to do it ... I mean they'll work for a pittance nine to five, just for the security of it.'

Finally, the researcher/writer (20) again went for discipline:

'A certain amount of mental discipline.' .... Because it's very easy - especially for somebody with my sort of disposition - to do things that you'd like to and always wanted to, but it's not earning you any money.

Again, you've got to keep that in mind all the time.'

He said that this was the one thing that members of his family admired; that he got down to it 'when you don't have to'. But, as he pointed out, he did have to in order to earn anything.

In summary, what these responses described was a set of characteristics that were appropriate to people working independently, in a situation where they had only themselves to rely on - which would explain the emphasis on 'self'. It was up to them whether the work was done to a high enough standard, and whether the deadline was met - so 'discipline' was seen as essential. They seemed to be distancing themselves from situations of externally imposed discipline and 'clock time',

which would be typical of an organisational, industrial or more bureaucratic and structured work environment. They did not seem to need this, and were similar to those identified by the 1988 Henley Centre report as those who would prefer to organise their own worktime, were 'individualistic', and particularly desired autonomy. Their self-reliance also meant that they shared the qualities necessary for the 'high trust positions' which Giddens suggested could be treated flexibly; they were not constrained by the specific locale, timetable and surveillance of a formal organisation. The way they presented themselves was particularly compatible with working independently from home, but it also had much in common with the position of the 'free professional', so it should perhaps not have been so surprising to find that the terms 'professional' or 'professionalism' were to be found throughout the interviews, and constitute the second main theme identified in this section.

One of the later questions (Q46) asked them which terms they identified with; the choice was between: entrepreneur, business person, professional, craftsman and manager. All but one indicated that they identified totally or partially with *professional*, the next nearest being *manager* to which half responded positively, and *business person* and *freelance* (not on the original list) were mentioned by nearly half; the former with more certainty by the men, the latter by the women. In general there was a lack of enthusiasm for descriptions that emphasised making money and commercialism, and *entrepreneur* seemed to come into this category. More significantly, the term *professional*

was mentioned earlier in the interviews (that is, unsolicited) by thirteen of the respondents, whereas the other terms were only rarely to be found.

In response to being asked specifically how they would describe themselves, it was only the publisher of the directory (3) who said she did not think of herself 'as part of a profession'; she seemed to be using the term in the strict sense of the traditional professions and said she did not 'feel like a professional somehow'. The illustrator qualified her response, saying she would like to think of herself as professional, but thought 'that's maybe pushing it'; but she indicated that she did identify with the term elsewhere in the interview. Similarly, the management consultant (15) at first said, 'professional - not really', and went on to explain that he used the term 'in the loose sense, like doing a professional job ... I often use the term semi-professional'. Others just responded positively, and most expanded on their response in some way, indicating the different ways in which the word could be used, most noticeably that, as in the cases already quoted, it can be a verb or a noun and it can be used in a strict sense or more loosely. Other responses included:

'Professional - yes, very' (1).

'Yes, professional - because it is my profession, and I make money by it' (4).

'Professional - yes, I see myself as providing a professional service' (5).

'I see myself as a professional craftsman - the work

has got to be delivered immaculately' (6).

'I would say professional ... It's not so much a business - it's more of a professional service; somewhere between the two maybe' (7).

'Yes, chiropody is a profession, hypnotherapy is a profession' (8).

'Yes, I would say I'm professional' (9).

'Professional - yes, very much so. Funnily enough, I think one of the things I've striven for - I mean the music business is noted for its lack of professionalism - is to apply some of the basic rules of professional business to what I do' (11).

The computer journalist (12) said he thought of himself as a professional, although he said he was 'blackened' by the NUJ because he worked for the *Times*. He seemed in little doubt that despite this he was a professional. On the other hand the copywriter (13) said:

'I'd like to think I'm professional, but I don't know whether writing is a profession. I should think it probably is. I'd put that, yes.'

The computer designer (14) made a very similar comparison between what might be a more traditional definition and his own identification with the term:

'Professional - I like to think I'm professional. If you talk to someone who calls themselves a professional - that is one of the professions - they'll say I'm not a professional.'



Lastly, were these responses:

'I suppose it's professional person, but I do see myself as running a business ... and you have to take on all the responsibilities of a business as well as being a professional' (16).

'Initially professional, because I'm a qualified engineer, and I do a professional job. But I do think entrepreneur is relevant because I force the pace' (18).

'We're professionals ... we're not dabbling, we're professionals' (20).

This last respondent, the researcher and writer, had had a disagreement with the Inland Revenue on his and his wife's self-employed status, and went on to say:

'I've used this phrase a lot: we are freelance, self-employed, independent professional people.'

The unsolicited use of the term 'profession', 'professional' or 'professionalism', in response to other questions, emphasised the varied way in which the word could be used. The respondents' own words can best illustrate this:

'The *Ownbase* letter gives you a feeling of professionalism. I think I'm a professional in what I do, but it's very much on the borderline, and I think belonging does give me the sense that yes I am doing something worthwhile - I am working properly' (2).

'I think it (her directory) does look more

professional now' (2).

'It may be a function of the people that I meet - after all, I don't professionally meet people who are perfectly happy in their jobs' (5).

'It's very important that what I do I don't do for nothing. That's the difference between being amateur and being professional' (6).

'Well, I've kept all my clients and patients for over a year now. So they obviously see me as professional' (8).

'I used to get public recognition from the ones I taught, but would be regarded by other professionals as a bit of a dilettante perhaps' (10).

'Then there are other people, I am sure, who have the view that if you're not an accountant or a doctor or a lawyer, you're not really a professional and you're not a serious person' (14).

'If I'm attending a professional meeting ... there's always a role for me at a professional meeting about getting visibility ... Then there are the offshoots of professional organisations (used for networking) ... and the London consultants group which is a professional trainers and management developers' association' (15).

'I think if you have a professional approach to your customers they view you as serious, regardless of where you work. If you're not professional, and you send tatty material to the wrong people, they're not

going to view you as serious' (16).

'I'm a professional cartographer, map-maker and map designer ... The professionals I deal with, they're the ones that matter' (17).

'I go to them (the people he does work for) in my own right, as an independent professional man ... I think of myself as a professional man doing a competent job, and charging a professional rate for doing it' (18).

'Except for people who consult me professionally, I find nobody else has any idea what I'm doing', and of the possibilities for more work to be done from home, 'I see that as the future for a lot of professions ... priests have virtually always been at home' (19).

This last example, the patent agent who described his work as 'an intellectually satisfying profession', made the distinction between 'true professional time' (and within that the need for varying degrees of expertise) and other time; and he would vary the hourly rate accordingly. He added that he did 'what I think some other professions do - give an hour's free time' so that he and the potential client could decide whether it was appropriate to go ahead.

From these additional examples, the wide variation in the use of the term 'professional' and its derivations became clear. Meanings included: not amateur; done to a high standard; serious; to do with service and/or considered worthwhile; involves expertise and/or qualifications; related to special associations; personal quality or attitude; image; and, most obviously, one of

a few specific and recognised occupations, or comparable with them.

These can be related to the historical origin of the term profession, which was first used to describe church ministry, in which the faith was professed. It carried with it notions of service, ethics, and all that was non-commercial; far removed from the materialism of 'trade' and commercialism. Incumbents were not considered to be paid as such, but were granted a 'living' (usually in a large and comfortable vicarage or rectory, with staff provided).

The professions did not conform to the dominant Industrial Revolution model discussed in chapter 2. The disdain for commercialism and the freedom from having their time 'clocked' were both mentioned as exemplifying the way in which cultural and historical factors that did not fit the distorted and simplified model of industrialism were ignored. Furthermore, it was the professions who were traditionally to be found working from home until very recently.

As the professions encompassed other occupations, they continued to be associated with conservative ideals; they managed to combine a particular respectability of a non-commercial kind with a relatively high value being attached to their time. With professional associations to protect them, their market situation was assured. The use of the term professional, therefore, not only emphasised the generally very positive way in which the

group viewed themselves; it implied **both** *autonomy* and *legitimacy*. This was in stark contrast with the 'homeworker' image, which they represented as having neither.

## 2 Rejection of 'homeworker' image

When asked if they identified with the term 'homeworker' or 'homebased worker', and what they would otherwise call themselves (Q43), only one, the computer journalist, said he would ever use the term. He gave as his reason, 'because I write about the damned subject; and because that's the term which is used (i.e. *homeworker*), I used it'. He seemed to be saying that because he and others like him were referred to by this term then he felt obliged to use it also. Elsewhere he also said that he referred to himself as a 'homeworker' to his wife's friends, because he was amused by the effect it had on them. None of the others would have used the term.

The journalist (1) and the videotext editor (2) rejected it out of hand: 'Freelance, definitely not homeworker' (1); 'I wouldn't (she laughed) - I work from home'. The illustrator (6) also said she would use the term 'freelance', and both the computer designer (14) and the researcher/writer (20) said they would say 'self-employed'. Three others (7, 10 and 17) said they would just say they worked 'from home' or 'at home'. The copywriter (13) and the management consultant (15) said respectively: 'I say I work from home. I'm homebased'; 'I say home-based, home-office based, or based at home'. The publisher (3) and the patent agent (19) also said they would call themselves 'homebased', but it

wasn't entirely clear to what extent this was a consequence of the question wording as well as the organisation to which they belonged, that is (originally called *Homebase*).

Three others emphasised what they actually did. The chiropodist said she would say 'I do chiropody' and that she identified more with what a dentist does. The technical author said, 'I just call myself a technical author, and I work from home, from my own office.' And the translator said, 'I think of myself as someone who does 'translations'; she added, 'I work from home - but it's what I do rather than what I am.'

When asked *what they thought of as the general image of the term 'homeworker' - and whether it was a term they would avoid*, responses again fell mainly into a few categories, and a fairly coherent stereotype emerged. Three (1, 2 and 14) just said they rejected the term without offering a definition. But there were four mentions of it being associated with women:

'Women who stay at home and make curtains for firms at a penny an hour, and lick envelopes. It's quite derogatory because of the image it's got.' (8)

'Homeworking is a term I would avoid because the main image to me is of women assembling pencils for a pittance.' (10)

'Homeworker - it's a bit of a downgrade. It sounds like a mother with a couple of children sewing up

textiles or something like that.' (20)

'I grew up thinking homeworkers were those women who threaded fake pearls on strings or stuff like that. I assumed homeworkers were women doing piece work.'

(6)

The association with *piece work*, *envelopes* and *sewing* were mentioned by others:

'The term homemaker is identified with people who do piece work for factories, or addressing envelopes, or things that are very badly paid, for someone else.' (3)

'Conjures up someone doing piece work.' (4)

'The term homemaker does tend to conjure up people doing piece work, sewing, that sort of thing, or envelope stuffing.' (7)

'It's got an historical legacy left from generations ago - you see someone sitting there in poor light, sewing.' (5)

'Homemaker - assembling cuddly toys for 20p an hour.'  
(13)

'I think people tend to think of someone doing sweated labour, you know, addressing envelopes or sewing soft toys.' (9)

'There's the image of exploitation - people asked to address envelopes for a penny a thousand or some ridiculous fee.'

This last respondent also mentioned the perceived 'amateurishness', and another saw it as having an 'amateurish' image:

'To say something like "homeworker" to me has connotations of amateurism or amateurishness - I work from home.' (11)

The idea that it had influenced the image of anyone working from home, with the implication of 'playing around', was also considered:

'I think most people's image of people who work from home, 'homeworkers', is that they're playing around, they're not serious about it, but doing it to fill time in - that's the idea in my son's head.' (17)

The patent agent (19) seemed to have a very distinctive idea of the term, associating it with 'mail order people' his brother used to employ; and the management consultant (15), again reflecting the interest in the use of computer terminals and networks, said:

'Somebody who's doing something manual in some way at home and has got a space for that. To a certain degree now it's becoming a computer networker. But primarily it's some kind of craft activity.'

In summary, the general image of a 'homeworker' was believed to be someone (usually a woman) employed at very low, piece-work,



rates of pay, and doing work that was not taken seriously. This description fitted closely Pugh's definition of a homemaker, discussed in chapter 1; and it was a description of work that had neither *autonomy* nor *legitimacy*. It was not surprising that it was rejected by those interviewed.

The term 'teleworker' was not mentioned during the interviews, and was never considered relevant, but this last comment quoted above acknowledged the link that was being made between computers and working from home.

Although technology was not found to be an important issue in the pilot interviews, respondents were asked what technology they had, for domestic and work purposes. The first part of the question produced responses that were probably typical of any middle-class household; large number of dish-washers and other 'labour-saving' equipment.

The second part of the question, concerning technology for work, indicated that all but two (the enameller and the chiropodist) had a computer, although the chiropodist had just advertised for a personal assistant to deal with clerical work and would presumably require a word-processor at least. Fourteen also had an answerphone; and the point was made in Chapter 1 that the computer (especially when used predominantly as a word-processor) and the answerphone are merely updated versions of the typewriter - more recently the electronic typewriter - and the telephone. Four of the men (the computer journalist, the copywriter, the

technical author and the patent agent) had a modem. One of the women, the translator, was thinking of getting one. Again, it was the men who mentioned the use of a FAX more often; two had one (the copywriter and the researcher), one was thinking of getting one, and two more used a neighbour's or an outside facility. One of the women (the journalist) also mentioned using a FAX shop, and it was likely that others used this kind of facility but questions did not specifically address outside use of equipment. Finally, it was four of the women and two of the men who used specialist equipment. These were: the video-text editor (2), the enameller (4), the illustrator (6), the chiropodist (8), the manager of the band (11) and the printer. Their work would not have been possible without this, whereas computers and answerphones were in most cases an 'enabler' for this group as they were for Haddon and Silverstone's third (professional) group cited in Chapter 1 (Haddon and Silverstone 1993), and to be found in almost any place of work as well as many homes. Technology, that is, was not a defining factor, and 'teleworker' was not a term being used despite its promotion as having a more 'scientific', modern, and male image. It did not, it could be argued, carry with it the autonomy and legitimacy of the more conservative 'professional', let alone the implicit respectability that was particularly compatible with working independently from home.

## **Conclusion**

The major theme throughout the analysis was the distinction between **autonomy** and **legitimacy**. The autonomy was apparently a

consequence of using their home as the place of work and of being self-employed and independent; it was expressed in terms of personal freedom and satisfaction, control over work conditions and environment, and being 'one's own boss' on one's own territory. It was the most obvious advantage identified by the group.

Legitimacy, on the other hand, was a problem; a problem arising from the association with 'home', and being seen as 'at home' - that is, 'in the wrong place at the wrong time. This was compared with the legitimacy of work in an organisation - that is, in a specific place, away from home, during specific hours. The latter has come to be the normative model in a modern, industrial society. One consequence was that those who worked at home had to work hard at the way they presented and marketed themselves and their services in the initial stages, until or unless they could rely on personal reputation.

A. H. Halsey made the distinction between:

'the actual conditions of work - its autonomy or lack of it, its intrinsic satisfactions, and its attendant amenities';

and,

'the terms on which (individuals) can sell their skills and their labour on the market' (Halsey 1986:30).

These can be identified as the **work situation** and the **market situation** (which encompass autonomy and legitimacy); a

distinction that can be traced back to David Lockwood's *The Blackcoated Worker* (1958). Goldthorpe later drew on it for his 'two major components of class position' (Goldthorpe 1980:39), making the comparison between people's occupational positions in terms of, on the one hand:

'their location within the systems of authority and control governing the process of production in which they are engaged, and hence in their degree of autonomy in performing their work-tasks and roles'

and on the other hand,

'their sources and levels of income, their degree of economic security and chances of economic advancement' (ibid:39).

Again the parallel with autonomy and the legitimacy with which their work is viewed - and therefore their pull on the market - is clear. For those who work from home, their work situation may be good; but their market situation - originally defined by Weber as the opportunity for exchanging goods or services for money (Weber 1947:181) - may be poor.

The common factor underlying both these considerations is the difference between 'house', which is objective or tangible, and 'home', which is subjective or conceptual. Those interviewed here generally owned their own house, but they worked at or from 'home'. Quoting from Parkin, Halsey made a further point:

'the long-run tendency in Western Societies has been for the share of national income accruing to property steadily to diminish relative to income from

employment' (Parkin 1972, in Halsey op cit:30).

For those who work from home, the building - the house - is an essential capital asset, or means of production, contributing to their ability to be self-employed and generate an income. It is central to their work situation and their autonomy; but also, as their 'home', in its traditional and conservative sense, it can threaten their market situation.

To counteract this threatened legitimacy, strategies had apparently been developed. Apart from doing things that made it less obvious they were working from home, these included the use of the term *professional*, rejection of the term *homeworker*, and signs of the avoidance of the term 'at home'. In a context in which meanings had been constructed in advance, they were apparently providing alternative meanings in order to improve their legitimacy and therefore their market situation. They wanted their work to be taken seriously, and it is just such a group that may have sufficient 'personal influence' to be instrumental in a reconstruction of meaning, or 'diffusion of innovation' (see, for example, Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Rogers 1962, respectively).

## CHAPTER 8

### ANALYSIS OF THE POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRES

#### Introduction and review

Two purposes were served by the main analysis of the interviews: concepts were developed, and those that had apparently become taken for granted were questioned. A broadly hermeneutic approach had been combined with a 'critical intent'. The sample interviewed was small; it was a purposive, **theoretical sample**, suitable for the generation of categories as the basis of relevant concepts.

Within the framework of Thompson's **methodology of interpretation** the analysis of the interviews constituted the final stage of *interpretation*, following the *social historical* and *formal or discursive analyses*. But the methodology also reflected the principles of **grounded theory** (Strauss 1987); if *induction* described well enough the way in which experience guided the initial choice of questions to be asked, and *deduction* the theoretical implications drawn from the interviews, then *verification* of those conclusions rested on the analysis of responses to a postal survey which forms the subject of this chapter, and is discussed below.

The chapter is organised into 3 parts which reflect the 3 main sections of the questionnaire: a brief section of predominantly closed background questions; a multiple choice section concerning

how respondents came to be working from home; and the main section of predominantly open-ended questions (see Appendix B).

#### **PART I: THE POSTAL SURVEY AS A SOURCE OF VERIFICATION**

The contact list used for the interview sample was limited because it did not include all members of *Ownbase*. The intention was, therefore, that those surveyed should be representative of the full membership, and in this way establish the extent to which the analysis from the interviews was verified by a larger, more representative sample. A short explanatory article was placed in the *Ownbase* newsletter, together with self-addressed and stamped cards; one inserted loose into each of the 250 Newsletters, to reach every member. This resulted in 96 returned cards, indicating a willingness to fill in a questionnaire. A further 60 members were contacted directly by means of the contact list. Therefore 156 questionnaires were sent out in 1989 (see Appendix B for the original questionnaire). Of these 111 were returned and useable, the mainly open-ended questions having been answered fully.

The postal survey sample was to be a larger sample, representative of the membership of *Ownbase*; again a theoretical sample nevertheless. It could be used to check out - to verify - the validity of the conclusions reached on the basis of in-depth, qualitative research with the smaller interview sample. For it to fulfil this purpose, the interview sample should be judged to correspond with this larger sample, also from *Ownbase*. The interview sample was therefore compared with the key features of

the survey sample (elicited from the **Background Questions** at the beginning of the questionnaire) which are described below.

1. *There were more women than men in the postal survey; 65 women, or 58%, compared with 47 men, or 42%. In the interview sample half were women and half men, by design, creating the only significant difference between the two samples.*
2. *The majority of those surveyed were in their thirties and forties.* Roughly two-thirds of those in the postal survey were in their thirties and forties (36% in their forties, and 28% in their thirties). Of the rest, 18% were in their fifties, 13.5% in their sixties, and only 5% in their twenties. Reflecting this distribution, two-thirds of those interviewed were in their thirties and forties, less than one third in their fifties and sixties, and only one in his twenties.
3. *The overwhelming majority of those in the postal survey were self-employed (84%, with 10% describing themselves as partly self-employed). All those interviewed were self-employed.*
4. *The occupations of those surveyed were predominantly white-collar. Following their own descriptions, the 111 in the postal survey were classified as follows:*

Consultancy	19
Writing	16
Arts, crafts, graphics	12
Indexing	9



Other - professional	9
Editing	8
Secretarial/word processing	7
Other - non-professional	6
Computer work	5
Accounting/book-keeping	5
Training/Tutor	5
Publishing	4
Research	4
Therápies	2

All these categories except four - indexing, secretarial, accounting/book-keeping and other non-professional - were represented in the interview sample. The first three of the four exceptions were predominantly female occupations in the postal survey sample, and their omission in the interview sample may have been partly a function of the lower proportion of women in that sample than in the survey sample (50% compared with 58%). They may also have been less well represented in the contact list used for the interview sample.

It was noticeable that a large number (19) had described themselves as consultants: six as management consultants, three computer consultants, three marketing consultants, two PR consultants; others were a playground consultant, a training consultant, a consultant in bee-keeping, an insurance consultant, and an environmental education consultant. It was notable that fifteen of the nineteen were men. Similarly, although the two in the interview sample who referred to themselves as consultants

were a man and a women, two further men referred to some of their work (with computers) as consultancy.

Few of the traditional professions were represented in the sample survey, and the residual group *'other - professional'* was made up of: two translators, one town planner, one landscape architect, one intellectual property agent, one translator/programmer, one translator/writer, one chiropodist, and one in public relations. The interview sample contained no traditional professions either, but some of these *'other - professional'* occupations were represented.

5. *The majority of the postal survey respondents were not new to working from home.* Over a third (35%) had been working from home for 2 to 5 years, a quarter had been doing so for 6 to 11 years, and 20% for over 11 years - including 9% who had worked at home for over 20 years. Only 19% had been working from home for less than two years. And the pattern amongst those interviewed was very similar, with exactly half having worked from home for between 2 and 5 years, and of the other ten all but three had worked from home for more than 5 years.

6. *Relatively few of those in the postal survey (about 1 in 10) had young children in the household.* Two thirds (64%) of those surveyed had no children at home, less than a quarter (24%) had children under 16, and only 12% (6 men and 6 women) had children under 5. Of the twenty interviewed, thirteen (again representing two thirds) had no children at home; five others had school-age

children (teenagers in three of these cases), and only two had children under the age of five. The proportions were therefore almost exactly the same as in the survey sample.

7. *Nearly half the respondents (44%) said they would not like to work outside home again; 43% said they would 'under certain circumstances', with just 7% saying they would like to (and of the few who were employees, more were likely to be in this group - 14% compared with 7% of the self-employed). Of those interviewed, only a few had given any indication that they might like to work outside home under certain circumstances; in general there was little apparent desire to do so.*

8. *The income generated from their work made a significant contribution to the household income in most cases. As any household may have more than one source of income, the questionnaire asked what proportion of the household income their work contributed. For nearly a quarter their income was the only household income; rather more for women than men. For a further 11% it represented between 61% and 99%, and this group was almost entirely men with just one woman. For almost a quarter, made up of roughly equal numbers of men and women, it produced between 41% and 60%. For about 16%, of which more than twice as many women than men, it was between 21% and 40%; and for a quarter - three times as many women as men - the income from their work represented 20% or less of the household income. So there were more women to be found at both extremes; but overall 70% of the men earned 41% or more of the household income, compared with 40%*

of the women. Amongst those interviewed, there were four who relied totally on their own income. Proportions were not asked for, but again it was clear from incidental comments that there were often other sources of income. For example, from partner/spouse, relevant to 8 women and 5 men (although two single men had a tenant); one man mentioned unearned income, and another a pension. But it was clear that in all cases the earned income was considered important.

In summary, therefore, there was a good degree of correspondence between survey and interview samples, confirming that this was a distinctive group - neither homeworkers nor teleworkers, but overwhelmingly self-employed. This group is part of the 75% of the self-employed that Hakim found to be home-based (Hakim 1989:288); also perhaps a reflection of the growth of the self-employed that occurred particularly in the South East (Creigh et al 1986). Furthermore, the majority of the self-employed were found by Creigh et al to be in their thirties and early forties, as was the case here. This they put down to 'the skills, experience and confidence required for self-employment (which) may only be acquired after some years in the labour force' (Creigh et al 1986:185). This can be contrasted with the age distribution found amongst homeworkers. Allen and Wolkowitz found very few in their forties, the largest group being in their late twenties, with the increased likelihood that they were caring for pre-school children (Allen and Wolkowitz 1987:74-75 and 124-129). Few of the Ownbase group had pre-school children.

The characteristics of the Ownbase members also suggested a degree of stability in their work situation; most having worked from home for over two years, after some years in a more conventional work setting, and few having any wish to work outside home again. Responses to a later question (Q14) concerning space used for work revealed that of the 111 in the survey, 91 had a room specifically for work; 41 of these referred to an 'office' and 17 to a 'study'. A similar pattern was found amongst those interviewed, all but two of whom had a room dedicated to work. The impression was not of a transitory group.

Later, in 1990, Ownbase carried out its own survey of members (referred to here as the OBS, it involved a sample of 79 who responded). The results of this allowed for a comparison to be made with the survey sample used here. It may well have been the same people who responded to both surveys - there was no way of knowing - but the profiles were very similar:

1. *The OBS, like the postal survey, contained more women than men - 57% compared with 43% (although the proportions were reversed in a later survey carried out by Ownbase in 1993: 47% women to 53% men).*

2. *The majority of the OBS sample were in their forties or thirties. Reflecting exactly the proportion in the survey sample, 36% of the OBS were in their forties, with the next largest group again being in their thirties; an even smaller proportion in the OBS (4%) were in their twenties.*

3. *The majority in the OBS were again self-employed. 76% were classified as self-employed; a lower proportion due to the*

inclusion of 16% classified as 'planning to work at home'.

4. The overall occupational profile of the OBS again closely reflected that of the postal survey reported here. The main difference concerned the categories 'consultant' and 'computer work'. Whereas it represented a relatively large proportion in the survey sample (17.1%), the OBS gave the proportion of consultants as 2.7%; on the other hand only 4.5% of the survey sample described themselves as doing computer work, compared with 15% of the OBS respondents. The two sets of classifications (as percentages) were:

**Occupational distribution: postal and OBS surveys**

	Postal survey (%)	OBS survey (%)
Consultancy	17.1	2.7
Writing	14.4	15.3
Arts, crafts, graphics	10.8	10.8
Indexing	9.0	8.1
Other - professional	8.1	10.9
Editing	7.2	8.1
Secretarial/Word processing	6.3	6.3
Other - non-professional	5.4	-
Computer work	4.5	15.0
Accounting/book-keeping	4.5	4.5
Training/Tutor	4.5	9.9
Publishing	3.6	3.6
Research	3.6	2.7
Therapies	1.8	2.7
Proof reading	3.6	3.6

In general, therefore, the characteristics of those surveyed were

not only such that the interview sample was a fair representation of this larger group, but paralleled those of Ownbase's own survey in key respects. This lent support to the assertion that the postal survey sample and the interview sample were a fair representation of the wider membership of Ownbase - a self-selected group nevertheless constituting a theoretical sample.

## **PART II: THE DECISION TO WORK FROM HOME**

The reasons given by the interview sample for working from home suggested that there had usually been a degree of choice and thought, that it was sometimes a reaction to an employment situation that was found to be unpleasant for a range of reasons (e.g. undervalued, responsibility undermined), and sometimes precipitated by the birth of a child or an early retirement. But there was often a desire to be independent of an organisational environment and/or employment and a stated preference for working from home - and in general a sense of satisfaction with the present work situation. Again, this general impression from a small sample can be compared with the reasons given by respondents to the larger postal survey.

Forty-two reasons for working from home had been taken verbatim from the original twenty interviews, between them reflecting the wide range of reasons given by those interviewed. Respondents to the postal survey were asked to indicate which of the 42 statements produced in this way applied to them (see first page of Questionnaire). Three statements (16, 33 and 35) received either no endorsements or only one and were therefore not used;

and statement 21, *Didn't want responsibility of large firm*, was felt to be ambiguous and therefore omitted. (N.B. In this section, Part II, statements are reported as given on the questionnaire; and the statement number, as on the questionnaire, is given in bold type after the statement).

The statements were presented in an arbitrary order on the questionnaire, but it was apparent that some were basically negative and could be described as 'push' factors, and some were positive and could be described as 'pull' factors. Some preliminary counts and cross-tabs were carried out on the basis of this distinction; these suggested, however, that much of the meaning and therefore the value of the essentially qualitative data would be lost in a purely quantitative analysis. A more interpretative method, appropriate to qualitative data, was decided upon.

Although it was not an exact process, it was possible to categorize the 42 statements, according to meaning, into the two main categories - 'push' and 'pull' - and an additional third category; and each of these three into sub-categories.

- A. 'PUSH' FACTORS:**
1. Negative response to previous **employment/organisation**
  2. Difficulty getting work **outside home**
  3. **Move** not planned
- B. 'PULL' FACTORS:**
1. Wanted to be **independent of organisation/employment**
  2. Preferred working **from home**
  3. **Move** planned/developed gradually



- C. OTHER FACTORS**
1. Received pension, severance, etc.
  2. Domestic/family change

Statements in the first two of the 'push' and 'pull' sub-categories (A1 and B1, A2 and B2) were to do with *employment/organisations* and *home*, respectively; statements in the third (A3 and B3) related to whether the move to working from home was planned ('pull') or not ('push'). **Other Factors (C)** were those associated with a particular *stage in career or family life* that could constitute either a 'push' or a 'pull' factor, but could nevertheless be a catalyst.

**A. 'Push' factors**

1. Negative response to previous employment

There were twelve statements allocated to this group - reflecting the large number of responses of this kind in the interviews. A quarter of the 112 respondents identified with two of these statements. They were: *Felt undervalued in previous employment* (**statement 8**) and *The organisational culture, or morale, was bad* (**23**). For the first of these there were more men than women, but the numbers of men and women were roughly equal in the case of the second. Both reflected very negative feelings about the previous employment, and this was even more true of the statement with the next highest score, *The situation at work became intolerable* (**statement 22**), with 22 respondents agreeing. Next were two statements that referred to lack of opportunities: *Little opportunity for personal growth in previous job* (**10**), and *Little opportunity for promotion in previous job* (**38**), which received 19 and 18 responses respectively. Another very negative

statement, *Couldn't wait to leave job* (37), received 16 endorsements and was apparently felt more by the men in the sample than the women. Three further statements scored between 12 and 14, and again suggested situations that were undermining of morale and/or autonomy; these were: *Few opportunities for independent thought in previous job* (18), *Own authority/responsibility at work was undermined* (24), and *Was working such long hours, had little time for anything else* (30). All these statements were relevant, therefore - some to a substantial degree - to this group; they suggest the kind of feelings that may be associated with lack of control (and therefore potentially with stress).

Three final statements received fewer responses of 10, 11 and 4 respectively. These were more factual; they were: *Inadequate remuneration for work in previous job* (36); *Had reached ceiling (in promotion and/or responsibility) in previous work* (15); *Little security in previous job* (28).

## 2. Difficulty getting acceptable work outside home

Nine people indicated that they *Couldn't get job in preferred work* (13), and only three that for them *Age precluded getting a job outside home easily* (31). In both these cases there were proportionally more men than women. But a third factor, which also implied a desire to be self-employed - *Overheads outside home too high* (2) - applied equally to men and women with a score of 14.

### 3. Move was not planned

Twenty-six of the 112 (roughly equal proportions of men and women indicated that they had *Changed to working from home relatively suddenly (it was not planned) (40)*. Being *Forced to make a change - made redundant (41)* applied to 12 respondents, more of these being men, while being *Forced to make a change - some other reason (42)* applied equally to men and women, with 16 responses.

### **B. 'Pull' factors**

#### 1. Wanted to be independent

Within this group there were four quite definite statements indicating a positive choice, and two that implied that there must have been a desire to be independent (**Statements 1, 7, 19, 20, and 32 and 29**). Of the first four one stood out as being relevant to more than half the 112 respondents; 57 indicated that they *Wanted to be independent (7)*: roughly equal numbers of men and women. A third of the sample also responded to *Wanted to run a business (1)*, although in this case there were proportionally twice as many men. Finally, roughly a quarter (28 and 26 respectively) indicated they *Wanted to follow a special interest (19)* and *Felt (they) could do better on (their) own (20)*.

The two further statements that indicated an inclination towards becoming independent were: *Saw opening - took initiative to fill a 'gap' (32)* and *Approached by someone else, who suggested going independent (29)*. Seventeen respondents had apparently seen an opening to be filled, and 8 (nearly all women) had been approached by someone suggesting they go independent.

## 2. Preferred working from home

The highest response to any of the statements was to the main one in this category, *Preferred working at home* (4), which received a score of 62, roughly twice as many women as men in this case. Similarly 44 responded to *Realised could make a living working from home* (5), which implied a conscious choice; and again there were twice as many women as men in this group. Another statement that suggested a clear commitment to this option, *Built on or moved in order to work from home* (34), was relevant in 7 cases.

## 3. Move to working from home planned/developed gradually

This group of statements indicated a transition towards working from home, sometimes involving specific preparation. Three of these factors were apparently more relevant to women than men. They were: *Planned to move to working from home very carefully* (39) which had 20 responses; *Work developed out of a hobby* (3) with 11 responses; and *Worked from home for previous employer* (27) which had 10 responses. In contrast, more men than women indicated that they *Had built up contracts while still working outside home* (17); this had a response score of 19, 11 of them men. Finally, there were two statements that indicated a degree of caution and planning, with a score of 11 and 12 respectively. The two were: *'Tested the water' before leaving previous job* (25), and *Did course in preparation for setting up on own* (26). Men and women responded roughly equally to these.

## C. Other factors

### 1. Early retirement, pension, severance payment

This section was relevant mainly to men. In the case of two of these statements - *Took early retirement (9)* and *Qualified for a pension (12)*, all but one of those who responded were men (response scores being 8 and 4 respectively). Of the 9 who responded to *Received a lump sum severance settlement (11)*, 6 were men and 3 women.

### 2. Domestic/family change

Of the responses to the two statements in this section, only one was from a man in each case. The statements were: *Domestic change (e.g. spouse/child moved out) made it possible (6)*, which received 8 responses, and *Began to work at home when baby arrived (14)*, which received 21. This last statement applied to 20 women therefore; that is, just under one third of the women in the survey sample. Only one of these women responded to statement 14 only; amongst the others both 'push' and 'pull' factors were well represented. So there were additional reasons to do with negative feelings about working outside home, and a preference for working from home and/or being independent, again suggesting a degree of choice.

In summary, the results indicated that a high number - over half - of those surveyed preferred working from home, and that, of these, there were more women than men. Similarly, a high proportion - just over a half - indicated a wish to be independent, and of these there were more men than women who said

they wanted to 'run a business'. Finally, the third high scoring section was to do with negative feelings about previous employment, with more men indicating that they had felt undervalued and could not wait to leave the job; and although the numbers were smaller, more women than men felt that the hours they had been asked to work were too long.

These gender differences seemed to suggest a difference in terms of where men and women were 'coming from'; the men's responses more often reflected in a reaction to what had probably been more continuous employment outside the home, and the women's a closer association with the home. This could also be discerned in the higher proportion of men who indicated they *had built up contracts while working outside the home* (17), and the high proportion of women who said their work had *developed out of a hobby* (3). It can also be linked to the earlier finding that the men more often thought of the room they worked in as part of the world of work, whereas relatively more women thought of it as part of the home.

Overall, however, the generally negative feelings about outside employment and an organisational structure, and positive feelings about being independent and working from home, were part of a wider picture of contrasts and conflicts to be found in answers to questions in the main section of the questionnaires. It is to that analysis that attention now turns, first to the positive feelings - related to autonomy.

**PART III: MAIN ANALYSIS**

**A. Flexibility and Autonomy**

The concepts of autonomy and flexibility emerged as central themes arising from the analysis of the pilot interviews, and came to form the focus of the preliminary analysis of the main interviews. Despite the possibility of attendant vulnerability, they seemed to sum up the sense of choice and control, together with personal freedom in terms of the use of time; also the way the interviewees worked, and were able to organise their work.

Both **flexibility** and **autonomy** were then included in one of the *work identity* options included in the main interviews, and again in the postal survey reported here (Q3 - see section B). But as this did not necessarily reveal what the two concepts meant to the respondents, the questionnaire included open-ended questions that specifically asked them what these concepts meant to them, in terms of their work:

Q4(a) What does the term 'flexibility' mean to you (i.e. in relation to your work)?

Q4(b) What does the term 'autonomy' mean to you (i.e. in relation to your work)?

Responses are described briefly here, together with illustrative examples, as a preliminary to the main analysis of the postal responses. This makes two points: (a) the illustrations will indicate the way in which (and fullness with which) questions were answered; (b) the answers in response to the two concepts, *flexibility* and *autonomy*, were such that they could be classified into relatively few categories - which was not true of the main analysis of 'home' and 'work' (Section B, to follow), where the

qualitative data was more complex and was therefore reduced to quantitative data in order to reveal the patterns and contrasts.

### 1. Flexibility

First, the term **flexibility** was seen predominantly in terms of the flexible use of time. Eighty-three of the 112 responses included a references to *not being tied to a nine to five working day*, and fifteen (sometimes from the same respondents) referred to *being able to work in the evening or early morning*. Examples of responses in this main category were:

'Mainly no longer being tied to the traditional Mon-Fri 9-5 working week.' (Respondent 4 Female)

'I work better early morning and early evenings therefore 9-5 does not really suit me.' (R26 F)

'I can work at any suitable hours, e.g. 7a.m. to 12 noon.' (R57 M)

Most of these responses were associated with 51 references to the *ability to fit work in with family and other activities*; 20 of these referred to *family* (all but one of these from women), and 11 to *domestic activities* (again, all but one from women), with a few references to socialising, health and gardening and/or weather. Examples were:

'Being able to attend meetings and seminars in "working hours".' (R9 F)

'Freedom ... to choose own activity programme, timed for optimum coordination with the weather and social engagements, which is provided by our "flexi-time".'  
(R13 M)



'I can slot into my day any job at any time in order to run the business, household and family'. (R21 F)

'Flexibility re time. Can fit around school runs etc., can take days off - as long as the work is done on time. Have worked through the night many times.'  
(R28 F)

'Work can be better co-ordinated with non-work activities - work becomes less rigidly defined or compartmentalised and more a way of living.' (R47 M)

'Within reasonable bounds I can choose my own hours, thereby being able to attend to domestic jobs if necessary.' (R58 M)

'I can .. adjust hours, take tea/coffee breaks when I like, let dogs out, generally fit my work into my life (rather than confining my "real life" to evenings and weekends).' (R68 F)

'Ability to move working times to suit other activities, see more of family etc.' (R110 M)

This interpretation of flexibility reveals again the way in which activities which are generally compartmentalised are seen as more integrated here. One of the main boundary markers between home and work is often the journey from one to the other; in contrast, two people associated flexibility in the use of time with the absence of travel problems; one said she could 'work all night and get home safely!' (R67 F)

References to the flexible use of time - not working 9 to 5, working in the evenings or at other times, and fitting work

around other activities and commitments - therefore constituted the largest group of responses. Only nine respondents made no reference to the flexible use of time (including two who did not respond to the question at all).

There were then 50 responses that defined flexibility in terms of the second main theme, that of *control, decision-making, choice and variety* (somewhat more men than women in all). Twenty two of these referred to the *ability to choose how work will be done and/or who to work for*. Illustrations of references to choice in how work will be done/planned were:

'Make own decisions, business plans etc.' (R16 M)

'Style/type of work can develop as my own skills improve.' (R20 F)

'The freedom to work (or not) in whatever way I see fit.' (R30 M)

'I decide when, where and how to work, for how long, with what order of priorities, etc.' (R55 M)

Examples of references to choice concerning what work will be taken on, and for whom, were:

'I do those jobs I find interesting.' (R8 M)

'Some choice in who I work for.' (R18 F)

'Possibility to accept/reject work.' (R19 M)

'Can turn down work or rearrange without losing goodwill.' (R25 F)

'Flexibility to accept or refuse any one job.' (R29 M)

'If I found another interest which could also generate income, I could change over almost at once.' (R44 M)

'Ability ... to choose which of various offers I take up and give priority.' (R46 F)

'I can change from one client to another.' (R54 M)

'I don't have to ask anyone else when making "quotes", taking on work, etc.' (R67 F)

There were twice as many women as men in this group.

Thirdly and finally, in relation to *flexibility*, there were 10 references to the *ability to be responsive to clients and/or customers*. Examples were:

'Having adaptability to customers' requirements and having a wide portfolio of services.' (R22 F)

'... not 9 to 5 but 9 to 2/4 if this is required - collect/deliver between 2 and 4 p.m.' (R23 M)

'... deadlines have to be met (unless there is some very good reason).' (R25 F)

'I am able to finish jobs of work as they require doing.' (R35 M)

'Flexibility to see clients at a time to suit their working hours.' (R50 F)

'Ability to respond quickly to clients.' (R92 M)

Apart from the need to work long hours at times, there were only two references to the *vulnerability/availability* associated with *flexibility*:

'other people and family see me as flexible and expect me to be so! To me flexibility means my work suffers.' (R80 F)

'Flexibility in my early-to-late hours; assumptions that I am available all hours, both professionally and socially.' (R86 M)

In general, therefore, **flexibility** seemed to be associated most closely with the use of time, which could have been expected. But it was also associated with aspects of autonomy - with a degree of control and choice, including what work to take on - seen as part of the flexibility. This could be explained in terms of the fact that the respondents were predominantly self-employed and their 'own boss'. The term 'own boss' was not used as such, however, in relation to *flexibility*; but its use or implication were prominent when the question specifically asked what **autonomy** meant in relation to the respondents' work (Q4b).

## 2. Autonomy

First, therefore, with respect to **autonomy**, there were 65 responses that either mentioned *being their 'own boss'* as such, or in some other way implied that they were *not answerable to anyone else and/or were free from surveillance*. This was the most obvious theme in response to the meaning of autonomy.

Examples were:

'Being my own boss.' (R12 M)

'I am my own boss (except when my wife wants the car!)  
- but we both have autonomy within a flexible partnership.' (R40 M)

'My own boss - planning what I do, how and when I do it. I'm not good at being told what to do.' (R41 F)

'Own boss. No bureaucratic chain of authority.' (R76 F)

'There are no bosses to lean on me and insist I put their point of view. I am not part of the 'rat pack' of correspondents in a particular field, who consult each other and the official experts.' (R48 F)

'Not having to be answerable to anyone.' (R38 F)

'I can make my own decisions without constantly reporting to directors or having them interfering in the way I wish to work.' (R58 M)

'Not dependent on employers' funny theories on who is suitable and who is not - I expect to be chosen on merit of service provided.' (R63 M)

'No-one frustrating my freedom of movement or dictating when I shall work or what I should do or when.' (R71 F)

'No-one looking over my shoulder.' (R91 F)

'No-one can make me redundant again.' (R98 M)

Some of these responses not only indicated what it was about being independent that was valued, but also what it was about being employed that was disliked. But two of the respondents were clearly employed rather than self-employed, so although they indicated they had a fair degree of autonomy, they were not their 'own boss' in the same way, and their responses reflected this:

' I organise my own work schedule though there are constraints, e.g. if I am observing and recording particular events; I have to be available at set times. Talk to boss once week/fortnight and meet

every 6 weeks. I have to complete the research projects I'm paid for - which are challenging - but the detail of my work is for me to arrange.' (R1 F)

'My job is very performance related and provided I reach a minimum target my firm do not bother me at all. My minimum is higher than theirs, and autonomy means I achieve that as I want at my own pace.' (R99 M)

Illustrating the second main theme, thirty-four responses included a reference to the other side of autonomy - *being responsible for all aspects of the work undertaken, and for its success or failure*; this picked up on the self-reliance and self-discipline that was evident in the interviews reported in the last chapter. Examples of responses that reflected this side of autonomy were:

'... take the praise, and criticism, for the results.'  
(R3 F)

'Being compelled to do all one's own chores - typing, accounts, post, admin. - time-consuming but unremunerative.' (R9 F)

'Be a filing clerk one minute and an M.D./finance director the next. To trust and use own judgement and accept benefits of correct decisions and the lessons of own mistakes.' (R19 M)

'I only have myself to answer to.' (R21 F)

'Total responsibility for doing the whole job, keeping to deadlines, etc.' (R26 F)

'Responsibility for managing my own work - time,

level.' (R31 F)

'Being solely accountable for my earnings, and solely responsible for any mistakes (keeps work accurate).'

(R42 F)

'Self-generated, self-controlled, being your own progress chaser.' (R79 M)

'Control - my successes are all mine (but so are my mistakes!).' (R84 F)

'Independence - self-made.' (R78 M)

'It means I can't fall back on anyone or get someone else to do the less pleasant parts.' (R89 F)

'With freelance work so often you are the end of the line, and the buck stops with you.' (R111 F)

Finally, the third main group of responses to the meaning of autonomy referred to *being able to decide which jobs to take on and/or the variety of work*. These were similar to some of the responses given in relation to *flexibility* (Q4a) and interpreted there as part of autonomy. There were 25 in this category specifically in response to the meaning of *autonomy* (Q4b). (Again there were more women than men who seemed to emphasise autonomy, but they were not necessarily the same people who responded in this way to the meaning of *flexibility*.) The extent to which the choice of work was seen as part of the way they worked - with the implication that they could turn work down - had not really been anticipated. Examples were:

'I can pick and choose - though I rarely refuse work.'

(R5 F)

'Ability to choose work and pace.' (R8 M)

'The ability to choose ... what work I do.' (R14 F)

'Ability to work independently on a small scale for a range of clients.' (R18 F)

'Being able to tell (not ask) customers what I will do - freedom to refuse work.' (R30 M)

'If I choose I needn't take on work.' (R44 M)

'Saying "no" when I want (not very often).' (R45 F)

'I can, to an extent, choose who I work for and the sort of topics I cover.' (R49 M)

'I can choose the direction I want my work to go in - i.e. client types.' (R67 F)

'Being able to tell a client, who pays badly or is unpleasant, that I will not be working for them again.' (R75 F)

'Completely free to choose kinds of work and clients, and to say "no".' (R81 M)

'If I don't get on with a patient or client I refer them on.' (R97 F)

'I can choose the kind of work - and also leave a client I am not enjoying.' (R105 F).

As a reminder to be careful about drawing generalisations from apparent relationships, two responses to the concept of autonomy made the point that being employed need not preclude the same kind of autonomy:

'I like to work with a great deal of independence - even "out" at work I mainly had own areas of responsibility, made own decisions and usually had own



physical space to work in. I really prefer work I can do from start to finish.' (R52 F)

'I always worked alone/autonomously, even when I was in the office, so being at home doesn't change that, it just makes it more apparent to my co-workers.' (R68 F)

Nevertheless, for the majority there was apparently an increased sense of autonomy and flexibility, which was presented as the main advantage of working independently from home. This confirms earlier findings in respect of members of Ownbase.

## B. 'Home' and 'work'

For this section, the qualitative data - the responses to the mainly open-ended questions - was converted into quantitative data. This was done for two reasons: first, responses were complex, and did not fall into a few categories as was the case for the meaning of flexibility and autonomy; and second, it allowed the underlying patterns to be demonstrated more clearly. The examples of actual responses in the last section will have illustrated the fullness of the responses to the mainly open-ended questions.

### 1. Contradictory images of home

From the interviews that formed the first phase of the research it was clear that the meaning of **home** was problematic; apart from difficulty in defining it, there was an apparent tension between how the members of Ownbase saw 'home' and 'work' and how they believed the general public saw them. In the analysis of the

interview data this was linked to the concept of *legitimacy*.

In the questionnaire two questions specifically addressing this contrast, in relation to home:

Q6: What is the meaning of "home" for you - and what associations does it have for you?

and Q7: Do you think there is a generally accepted image of 'home' - if so what do you think it is?

Using an interpretative approach appropriate for qualitative data such as this, the responses were categorised according to their meaning(s). The aim was to produce an inclusive framework that would (a) allow all parts of the (usually multiple) responses to be categorised, and (b) reflect as closely as possible the meaning of those responses.

First, all the responses to each question were recorded verbatim. These were then reduced in number by grouping together responses (or parts of the predominantly multiple responses) with the same meaning. So, at the end of this process the 112 responses had been 'reduced' to a list of 90 headings; examples were: *centre of family activities; part of the house only; refuge; where you can be totally yourself; where can relax best*. These can be compared with a complex original response such as:

*'My territory, retreat, lair - where I do things my way. My base for entertainment, hospitality, open doors where horizons can widen. My possessions and worldly goods where I can express my character, taste,*

*self.'*

The list of 90 was then reduced to a list of 18 by again grouping together according to meaning. For example, the following were put in the same group or category, and given the same number: *a lived in place; place where you DO things; where social activities take place.*

On the basis of the list of 18, the first, preliminary, count was carried out on the verbatim responses. This involved giving a number (1 to 18) to each response or part of a response according to the idea of theme it represented. The number of responses in each of the 18 categories was then recorded, in order to check that each had a significant number of responses. In this case two were dropped and integrated into another group; for example, *'parents'* was put with *'family'*. The resulting 16 themes or categories were then regrouped into six main categories (**A to F inclusive**); together with a residual category (**G**) for answers that suggested the respondents could not answer or had never thought about it. On this basis a second and final count was carried out, and the scores for each of the sub-categories counted.

In this way the 16 categories were grouped into 6 main headings, shown on the following page.

**A FAMILY/PEOPLE**

- 1 Family, parent-child relationship
- 2 People, relationships/animals

**B POSITIVE FEELINGS - IDENTITY/RELAXED**

- 1 'At home', relaxed, comfortable, warm, happy
- 2 Identity, self-expression, 'heart', centre
- 3 Base, territory, secure, 'ours'
- 4 Peaceful, refuge

**C FREEDOM/AUTONOMY**

- 1 Freedom, autonomy, choice

**D WORK,BUSY,ACTIVE,DEMANDS**

- 1 Work, busy
- 2 Lived in 'place', activity, people welcome
- 3 NOT relaxing, pressures, demanding, stress

**E NOT WORK - DOMESTIC, TRADITIONAL**

- 1 Retreat from outside world, not work, privacy
- 2 Domestic, servicing
- 3 Division of roles (between husband and wife)
- 4 Television

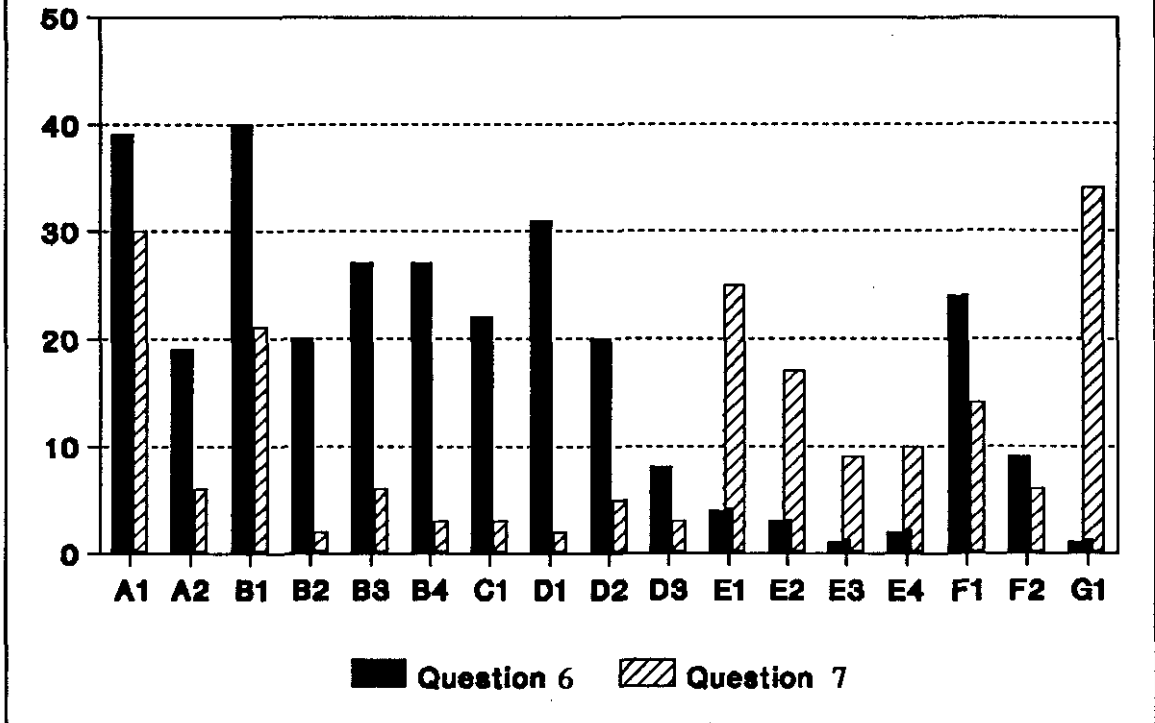
**F MATERIAL POSSESSION/HOUSE**

- 1 House, somewhere to 'live'
- 2 Possessions, asset, house

(G DON'T KNOW)

The results can be seen on the following page.

# Home



This table, based on the results from questions 6 and 7, represents the number of responses falling into the different categories. It therefore represents,

**SOLID COLUMNS:** The respondents' own meaning of 'home' (from Q6)  
**SHADED COLUMNS:** What they believed to be the generally accepted image of 'home' (from Q7).

First, it should be noted that for category G there were only two respondents who said they did not know in response to Question 6, what home meant to them. On the other hand a quarter said they did not know when asked what they thought the generally accepted image of home might be (Question 7); but those who did respond generated a very distinctive image. The only one of the categories (other than G) to receive a higher score of responses for what was seen as the generally accepted image of home was

group **E**, which associated home with activities that were not work, but were domestic and traditional - more specifically, with being a *retreat from the outside world of work* (**E1**), with *domestic and servicing activities* (**E2**) and a *traditional division of labour between men and women* (**E3**). And for ten respondents there was an association with the *television* (**E4**). This remarkably conservative and traditional image was in contrast with what home meant to the respondents themselves, and if it represented what the Ownbase sample believed to be the public image of home, it was clearly not in sympathy with the use of home as a place of work.

For all the other categories and their sub-divisions (that is, other than **E** and **G**) the scores were greater for Question 6, **the respondents' own image of home**.

Section **D** (*work related activity*), together with sections **B** (*positive feelings - identity, relaxed*), and **C** (*freedom, autonomy*) contained the greatest variation in responses to questions 6 and 7; the least variation was to be found in sections **A** (*family, people*) and **F** (*material possession, house*).

The wide difference in the case of **D**, which dealt with references to *work, activity, being busy, and the related pressures* could have been predicted. The greatest discrepancy of all was for the sub-category, **D1**, *work and being busy*; just two responses to Question 7 (the public image of home) came into this category, compared with 31 to Question 6 indicating it was part of the

respondents' own meaning of home.

Similarly, the results for Section C (*freedom/autonomy*) were not a surprise; in the interview analysis *autonomy* had been found to be an important concept. It was clearly linked to being self-employed, although there were indications that it was also associated with being on one's own territory, in one's own house. The data from the questionnaires similarly suggested it was a factor in the meaning of home for the respondents themselves, which tended to confirm the earlier conclusion. On the other hand, it was not seen as part of the generally accepted image of home. The score on this dimension for Question 6, indicating the concepts *freedom* and *autonomy* were part of the respondents own meaning of home, was 22; this can be compared with the relatively low number of 7 responses for Question 7, associating them with the generally accepted image of home.

The sub-categories constituting section B (*positive feelings - identity, relaxed*), like E, seemed to reflect the traditional image of home, as a place of security and rest, a retreat from the world of work, even an antidote to the world of work. It could have been expected, therefore, that this would have been an obvious area to have been well represented in the perceived public image of home. But, apart from B1, somewhere to feel 'at home', *relaxed, warm and comfortable* (which was well represented in the perceived public image of home but nevertheless more so in the respondents' own meaning of home), this was not so. The differences between the scores for what home meant to the

respondents and what they believed the generally accepted image to be were high in the other three cases: for B2, *identity, self-expression, 'heart', centre*, the difference was 18; for B3, *base, territory, secure, 'ours'*, it was 23; and for B4, *peaceful, refuge*, it was 24. All three were poorly represented in what was seen as the generally accepted image of home.

For the other category that represented what came to be the traditional image of the home, section A, relating to *family and people*, the differences were less pronounced; for the sub-categories A1, *family, parent-child relationships*, and A2, *people, relationships, animals*, the differences were 9 and 13, respectively. But again, it was perhaps surprising that they were not more strongly represented in what was seen as the generally accepted image of home.

Finally, there were relatively moderate differences of 10 and 3 for the two sets of scores for F, which referred to the physical house: F1 to the *house, as somewhere to live*, and F2 to the *possession of the house, perhaps as an asset*. This seemed to reinforce the distinction, noted in the last chapter, between the physical (objective) house, referred to here, and the (subjective) concept of home, the major focus of this research. Estate agents and developers may offer 'homes' on the market, but in reality can only sell houses - buildings - a distinction acknowledged in these results. The Ownbase group studied here, who generally owned their own house, were nevertheless seen as working from 'home'; and it seemed that, in turn, they may well



have felt that they 'lived' in their houses more than the general image implied, hence the greater difference for F1 than for F2.

In summary, therefore, the picture presented by the responses to questions 6 and 7 was one of contrast. Some of the features of the traditional image of a home - *an emphasis on the family and the idea of a peaceful retreat* - were strongly represented in the Ownbase members' meaning of home. But at the same time an emphasis on *work, autonomy and very positive feelings* made their own image distinctively different from what they saw as the generally accepted image of home. This gave some support to the conclusions concerning an *amended (or reconstructed) image of home*, in the main analysis of the interview data (chapter 7). Both Ownbase samples - those interviewed and those surveyed - presented a positive image of home that was compatible with using it as a place of work. This representation had parallels with Quiney's pre-Industrial Revolution 'industrious home' (1986).

When it came to the generally accepted image, some of the respondents seemed to be uncertain (question 7); this might have been a consequence of the wording of the question, but might also have been an indication that it was either less obvious than might have been supposed or not acknowledged. The majority, however, produced what they believed to be the public image of home; an aggregate image that was traditional in a very conservative way, reminiscent of Burnett's description of suburban life (1986). It was not compatible with using the home as a place of work. If their description was correct, it had

implications for the way their work was viewed, and this was borne out by other sections in the questionnaire.

## 2. Contradictory images of work

A further pair of questions (question 8 and 9) referred to 'proper work' - a term settled on after the somewhat unsatisfactory use of 'serious work' in the interviews. The intention was to get as near as possible to a phrase that would indicate whether the respondents' work, being carried out from home, was believed to be acknowledged as legitimate, and was therefore seen as of equal value and credibility as the same work carried out in a more conventional place of work. The questions were again designed to compare the respondents' own meaning with what they saw as the generally accepted image of 'proper work'. The questions were, therefore:

*Q8: What is the meaning of 'proper work' for you - and what kind of associations does it have for you?*

and *Q9: Do you think there is a generally accepted image of 'proper work' - if so, what do you think it is?*

Responses were categorised as for questions 6 and 7 relating to *home*. First they were reduced to the essential ideas they seemed to represent; just one such reduction resulting in 35 in this case. These were used for the first 'run' of item scores, to check the relevance of the individual ideas; ten were found to represent very few responses so were integrated or omitted. The remaining 25 were regrouped into 7 main categories (A to G), together with two residual categories (H and I).

This process produced the following classification:

**A HOME/FAMILY**

**B TIME**

- 1 9 am to 5 pm
- 2 Time paid for

**C PLACE**

- 1 Specific place
- 2 Away from home
- 3 Commuted to

**D EXPRESSIVE**

- 1 Enjoyable, fulfilling, interesting
- 2 Personal autonomy, independence, choice
- 3 Human, caring, of value to others
- 4 Concerns the environment or society
- 5 Includes unpaid, voluntary, work
- 6 Identifies with 'proper work', values own work
- 7 Variety, flexibility, challenge
- 8 Using skills, creative

**E BUSINESSLIKE/PROFESSIONAL**

- 1 Professional job or approach
- 2 Businesslike approach

**F EMPLOYMENT/ORGANISATIONAL**

- 1 Organisational/bureaucratic characteristics
- 2 Prospects, structured career
- 3 Employment, job, wage, salary
- 4 Special clothes - image, conformity

**G MONEY**

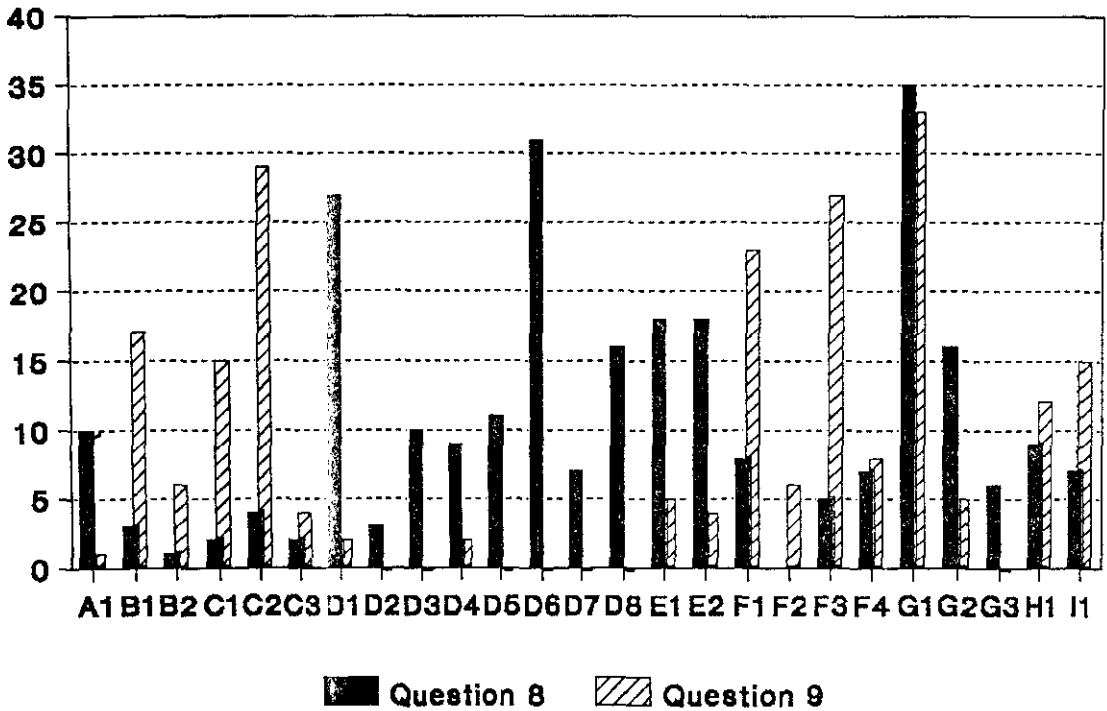
- 1 Pay, money
- 2 To earn a living
- 3 To support other interests

**H NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS**

(I NO RESPONSE, CANNOT ANSWER, IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY, ETC.)

The results can be seen on the following page.

# Work



This table, based on the results from questions 8 and 9, represents the number of responses falling into the different categories. It therefore represents,

**SOLID COLUMNS:** The respondents' own meaning of 'proper work'

**SHADED COLUMNS:** What they believed to be the generally accepted image of 'proper work'.

As was the case with the meaning of home, there were some who did not or could not respond to these questions concerning the meaning of work; seven in the case of question 8, and 15 in the case of question 9 - a lower number than was the case for the generally accepted image of home. Also, there were about twelve who seemed to have misunderstood question 8, and apparently answered it in terms of the public image of 'proper work' rather

than their own (for example: 'Routine, discipline, conforming to rules and imposed systems').

Despite these possible distortions, the profile of the **generally accepted image of 'proper work'**, generated by the responses to question 9 (shaded columns), was clear and stereotypical. The relevant dimensions, or categories, which had a higher response score for question 9 than for question 8 (the respondents' own meaning of 'proper work'), were those relating to: **B**, *time*; **C**, *place*; and **F**, *employment and organisations* (together with **H**, *negative connotations* to a much lesser extent). So it was these that seemed to define or distinguish the generally accepted image of proper work.

Of this group of categories (**B**, **C**, and **F**) the greatest difference between the two question scores - a difference of 25 - was to be found in the sub-category **C2**, *away from home*; the next highest being 22 for **F3**, the idea of *employment, or a job, with a wage or salary*. These sub-categories could be interpreted, therefore, as representing the core features of what was taken to be the general idea of 'proper work'; that is, as employment in a salaried or waged job, away from home.

Next was a group of three sub-categories with roughly equal differences between the two scores (differences of 15, 14 and 13, respectively). These were: **F1**, *organisational and/or bureaucratic characteristics*; **B1**, *9 a.m. to 5 p.m.*; and **C1**, *a specific place*. They could be seen as refinements on the core

features. These and the two core dimensions were very weakly represented in the respondents' own meaning of 'proper work' (in four of the five cases there were no more than 5 responses in the category, and of the 8 for F1 6 appeared to be due to the misreading of the question, and consequent distortion, mentioned above). The only sub-category amongst the three main dimensions, B, C and F to show a clearly insignificant difference, of 1, was F4, *special clothes, image and conformity*, which may have reflected the need to present the correct image whether one was employed in an organisation or not. In general, however, the picture presented of the generally accepted image of 'proper work' was of the conventional post-Industrial Revolution idea of structured employment, in and for an organisation. This was in stark contrast to their own position.

For all the other main categories (A, D, E and G) the scores were higher for question 8, the respondents' own meaning of 'proper work'. These produced a profile that contrasted with what was seen as the generally accepted image, described above, and reflected more closely their own position. There were variable differences in relation to category G, *money*; but significant differences were to be found in sections A, *home and family*, D, *'expressive' qualities* and E, *professional and/or businesslike approach*.

Of the sub-categories of G, G1 - *pay and/or money, as such* - revealed a negligible difference of 2 between the two equally high scores for questions 8 and 9 (35 and 33, respectively). On

the other hand, *earning a living* (G2) and *supporting other interests* (G3) featured more prominently in the respondents' own idea of proper work; with differences of 11 for G2, and 6 for G3 (which was not represented at all in responses to question 9). So although there was no difference in the importance attached to money, it was the notion of earning a living and of supporting other interests that distinguished the respondents' own meaning of proper work from what they believed to be the generally accepted idea. This suggested an attitude that was not focused solely on the money itself - was not merely materialistic - but included what it could be used for.

The differences in the number of responses that could be categorised as referring to the *home or family* (A) could perhaps have been expected. If the conventional way of working is seen to be away from home, then work will be seen as separate from home and family, and only one response to question 9 came into the *home and family* category. If, on the other hand, the home is also the place of work, as it was for this group, it is not surprising that what work meant to them included reference to the home and/or the family. There were 10 responses to question 8 that came into this category. And it could equally have been predicted perhaps that the majority (7) of these would be women, in view of the earlier findings concerning the closer association they made between their work area and the concept of home.

The two remaining sections, D and E, were more revealing in the present context. Section D was made up of a variety of types of

response that seemed to suggest an *expressive*, as opposed to an *instrumental*, attitude to work. For six of the eight sub-groups (D2, D3, D5, D6, D7, and D8) there were no responses to question 9; that is, they did not believe these 'expressive' qualities were seen as 'proper work'. For the remaining two (D1 and D4) the scores were just 2 in each case. It was in these areas, therefore, that the *Ownbase* group appeared to see 'proper work' - and apparently their own work - in a distinctively different way from what they believed to be the generally accepted view. Of the eight sub-categories, D6, which included responses that suggested they *identified their own work as 'proper work', and valued this work*, stood out as having a high score of 31. This confirmed the positive attitude to their work found in the interviews, but was nevertheless surprising in its magnitude. The idea of work being *enjoyable, fulfilling, and interesting* (D1), which reflected the same positive attitude, was nearly as prominent; the number of responses in this category was 27. For the association with *using skills and creativity* (D8) it was 16.

Then came a group of sub-categories that again demonstrated the tendency for the *Ownbase* group's idea of 'proper work' to be broader and less rigid than they believed to be the generally accepted idea. Three had similar scores of 10, 9 and 11, respectively. They were: D3, *human, caring, of value to others*; D4, *concerns the environment or society*; D5, *includes unpaid, voluntary work*. The other two seemed to say more about the qualities associated with 'proper work': D7, *variety, flexibility, challenge*, had a score of 7; and D2, *personal*



*autonomy, independence, choice*, had a score of 2. The ideas implied by the latter were implicit in some of the other categories also, however.

The differences between the scores for the two sub-categories of the final section, *E, professional and businesslike approach*, were very similar; and the scores for question 8 exactly the same in both cases, indicating the close parallels between the two concepts. *E1*, which focused predominantly on a professional job or approach (interpreted as encompassing competence, high standards, good service), was relevant to 17 responses to question 8, 6 of which included the word 'professional'. *E2*, which also had a score of 17 for question 8, focused predominantly on a businesslike approach (and included being efficient, practical, responsible, accountable, and committed). These can be compared with the few responses to question 9 that came into these categories: 5 and 4, respectively.

In summary, therefore, the generally accepted image of 'proper work', as members of *Ownbase* saw it, seemed to exclude their own work. On the other hand, their own meaning of 'proper work' reflected the way they worked, and they again seemed to value their work in a positive way. These conclusions were confirmed by responses to the first two questions in the questionnaire.

Question 1 asked whether, in their experience, they thought that work done from home was usually seen as 'proper work' by:

- (a) friends
- (b) people they met socially
- (c) people they did work for
- (d) the general public

answers to (a) and (b) were variable and inconclusive, but over half the respondents (58) gave a positive answer to (c) together with a negative answer to (d). This suggested that just over half found that their work was recognised by those they did work for, but felt that the general public did not recognise their home-based work as 'proper work'.

A follow-up question, question 2, asked about *changing attitudes*. Two-thirds (72) believed that attitudes were changing. The reasons they gave were categorised, as before; that is, so that they would be inclusive of all responses (or parts of responses when more than one reason was given), and reflect as closely as possible the meanings of those responses. The categories and scores (**totals** and breakdown) generated in this way, for the *reasons for change*, were:

<b>A</b>	<b>INCREASING POPULARITY OF WORKING FROM HOME</b>	<b>45</b>
1	More working from home independently: more men; less unusual	29
2	Others envious/see advantages/interested/aware	16
<b>B</b>	<b>IMAGE/LEGITIMACY OF WORKING FROM HOME</b>	<b>44</b>
1	High status work (more high paid work and/or freelance work done from home; high profile)	10
2	High standard of work produced; 'professional' job	8
3	High tech. image (telecommuting, networking etc.; modern communications)	5
4	Work done at home has legitimacy; can do 'proper job' there (actual place of work less important)	21

<b>C</b>	<b>FINANCIAL/PRACTICAL VIABILITY OF WORKING FROM HOME</b>	<b>26</b>
1	Realization it is viable as a realistic alternative	8
2	More firms contracting out work; employers see advantage; seen as cheaper option (overheads not considered)	9
3	Technology (FAX, computers, etc) makes it possible	9
<b>D</b>	<b>MEDIA COVERAGE</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>SOCIAL CHANGE</b>	<b>12</b>
1	Changing social patterns (changing gender roles; more women working)	6
2	New thinking (climate of change; interest in environment and community; get away from commuting; preferable way of working; quality of life)	6

So where attitudes were believed to be changing, this was explained predominantly in terms of the *increasing number of people working from home* - and the interest, even envy, expressed in this (a total of 45 responses in this category). They also cited the *improved image* which accompanied the move towards high status and 'professional' work, perhaps using modern technology; and a significant number (21 of the total of 44 in this category) pointed to the greater *legitimacy* home now had as a place of work - the actual place of work was thought to be of decreasing importance. Working from home was also thought to be seen as a *viable alternative*, in practical and financial terms, with 26 responses in this category. Finally, there was a smaller number of responses (15 and 12) that pointed to media coverage and social change, respectively. But the overall suggestion that attitudes were changing was evident, and the generally positive work identity found earlier amongst the Ownbase members

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interviewed was apparent here also.

### 3. Coping with a contradiction - presenting a positive image

Despite the belief that attitudes were changing, there were nevertheless indications that the contradictions to be found between what were seen as the generally accepted - and legitimate - images of home and work, and their own situation, meant that there was a need for the Ownbase group to counteract consequent lack of legitimacy. From the interviews it was apparent that they presented their work identity in a very positive way, but when probed would sometimes acknowledge the lower pay, insecurity and vulnerability that they could experience. This impression was again supported by the results of the postal survey.

Repeating the exact wording used for the interviews, respondents were asked to choose between two rather stereotypical images of working from home. Question 3 again asked whether, 'as someone working from/at home', they identified most closely with:

(a) part of a changing and perhaps exciting new pattern of work, with greater flexibility and autonomy;

or (b) part of a peripheral, secondary workforce - mainly less well paid, less secure than the primary workforce.

Option (a) included the 'flexibility' and 'autonomy' that the Ownbase members had been found to emphasise themselves, and it was suggested that it represented a rather utopian view. Option (b) could be seen as a stereotype of a 'homeworker', in the traditional sense, and this was - as before - overwhelmingly

rejected. Of the 112 respondents, 90 chose (a).

However, a provision for qualifying their answers in terms of option (b) reinforced earlier findings that some would acknowledge low pay, insecurity and vulnerability when probed. Asked if there were any aspects of (b) that were true, there were 70 responses that indicated that their **market situation** was not strong. There were, for example, 31 references to *insecurity*, 19 to *being paid less*, and a further 10 to the fact that they were not part of an organisation or company (so did not have perks, holiday pay, union support, legal protection and/or a pension scheme). Finally, there were 8 responses that conceded they could be seen as *peripheral, secondary, inferior, and perhaps not serious*.

Closely related to this group of market related factors were 12 response categories suggesting a **dependence on their own resources**. These included: *the need for clients; marketing themselves or their services; their state of mind/attitude; long hours; providing their own pension and insurance; and overheads not taken into consideration*. Although respondents were asked to give their answer 'as someone working from/at home', any of these points could, of course, apply to being self-employed; a point made by five of the respondents. On the other hand, there were 16 responses that emphasised that (b), with all its negative connotations, *might be true of others* (by implication traditional homeworkers), *but not of them*; again reflecting the rejection of the homeworker image, together with a desire to be seen as

different. Similarly, 7 responses suggested that *things were changing* and that they were *leading the way*; and 2 implied that any disadvantages were the price they had to pay for working the way they did.

If these results suggested an acknowledgement of a precarious market situation, it was not surprising that the overwhelming majority responded affirmatively to question 16(a), which asked if they were *aware of needing to present a certain 'image'*; there were 91 positive responses. A follow-up question, 16(b), asked those who said they were, *in what ways they coped with the need to present a certain image*. Responses were categorised using the same procedure as before; the categories and scores (totals and breakdown) generated in this way suggested image management techniques included:

<b>A</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF WORK</b>	<b>100</b>
1	Headed paper, business cards, etc.	66
2	Promotional literature/advertising image	8
3	Technology	6
4	Quality of printing and paper - presentation	20
<b>B</b>	<b>QUALIFICATIONS/EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>56</b>
1	Indicate experience	13
2	Indicate credentials/qualifications	40
3	Membership of professional/business association	3
<b>C</b>	<b>CORPORATE IMAGE/NOT HOME</b>	<b>45</b>
1	Use 'we'	18
2	Trade or company name/'associates'/'our business'	16
3	Other appropriate address (not home)	8
4	Meet clients elsewhere/avoid domestic issues	3

<b>D</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL/BUSINESSLIKE/HIGH STANDARD</b>	<b>38</b>
1	'Professional' (implication)	18
2	Businesslike (implication)	8
3	Keep to deadline/punctual/careful scheduling	6
4	High standard	6
<b>E</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF SELF</b>	<b>30</b>
1	Co-operative, good manner, confident	5
2	Dress appropriately	25
<b>F</b>	<b>TELEPHONE</b>	<b>22</b>
1	Telephone manner	10
2	Control background noise - children, TV, etc.	3
3	Separate phone lines	3
4	Answerphone	6
<b>G</b>	<b>USE OF APPROPRIATE WORDS ('clients', 'consultant', etc.)</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>CONTACTS</b>	<b>15</b>
1	Recommendation, reputation, references	7
2	Attend conferences, meetings, exhibitions, etc.	4
3	Personal contacts/previous existing clients	4
<b>I</b>	<b>IMAGE DOES NOT MATTER</b>	<b>3</b>

With the exception of the last category, the felt need for image management was clear; it reflected the personal nature of the relationship with the 'market' (potential clients, customers, etc.). As self-employed people, they had to find a market for their work themselves; they had to be **self-reliant** - a quality the interview group had emphasised. The practical implications of this seemed to be described by the other categories above: the importance attached to the quality of the literature they produced; the need for exposure, in person or by recommendation, in order to make the first contact; careful presentation of themselves whether face to face or over the telephone; a professional and businesslike approach; the assurance of



qualifications and experience; a 'corporate' image even, and careful choice of words used.

Although clearly relevant to being self-employed, some of these strategies were apparently used to counteract the association with 'home'. Obvious examples were: meeting clients elsewhere and/or using an outside business name; and the control of domestic background noises when using the phone. Less obviously, any of the factors could be seen as related to the need for *legitimacy*. When asked in question 16(c) if they thought their occupation/business would carry 'more status/prestige if carried on away from home?' over a third (39) said it would (18 said it would not, and 49 said they thought it would make no difference).

In the interviews it had been found that the positive identity presented by the interviewees included an association with the term *professional*; it was a word that was similarly shown to be an important aspect of the survey group's identity. Following the format used in the interviews, but with two added options (*consultant* and *freelance*), question 15 asked respondents to rank eight options according to which they 'would most usually identify with' (to be ranked 1) to the one they 'would least usually identify with' (to be ranked 8). The options were: *freelance, manager, consultant, entrepreneur, professional, an independent, business person, craftsman*. Of these the least popular were the terms *entrepreneur* and *manager*. Nearly half put *entrepreneur* in the seventh or eighth position and three-quarters put it in one of the last three rank positions (6th, 7th or 8th).

The term *manager* was somewhat less marginalised; a quarter put it in the seventh or eighth position, and half in the last three positions.

The two most popular were *professional* and *freelance*. As self-employed people identification with the term *freelance* could be said to be strictly correct, by definition; half the respondents gave *freelance* as their first or second choice, and two-thirds gave it as their first, second or third choice of the eight. The number who chose *professional* was slightly greater than this; just over half the respondents gave it as their first or second choice, and again two-thirds gave it as their first, second or third choice. And yet it could be argued that 'professional' was not strictly correct, by definition, if a narrow traditional definition were used; but it represented the way in which many of them wished to present themselves.

In the interviews it had been found that, whereas *professional* was a preferred term, 'at home' was problematic. For the women there was the felt association with being available, and with work that was not serious; and for the men there could even be the assumption that they were unemployed. There was evidence that attempts were made to avoid the use of 'at home', alternatives being 'from home' and even 'at work'. These findings were followed up in the final question of the questionnaire.

Question 17(a) asked if they said they worked 'at home' or 'from

home'; 37 said they would use 'at home', but 51 said they would use 'from home'. Question 17(b) asked if they 'ever' said they were 'at work', and 17(c) if they 'ever' said they were 'at home' - which was later considered rather unsatisfactory wording. Nearly half, however, said yes to 'at work', the implication being that they used it at least sometimes; this was an unexpectedly high proportion. The higher number of sixty-seven who said yes to 'at home' could have been expected, in view of its widespread everyday use. But, because of the question wording, the forty who responded with a 'no' to this question meant that they did not use it 'ever'. This would imply that there were attempts to avoid its use.

Differences by gender were not clearcut. From a base of 58% women and 42% men, proportionally more women than men (33 women compared with 20 men) said they would use 'at work', which was perhaps surprising, and about equal proportions (29 and 21 respectively) said they worked 'from home'. But significantly more women than men (22 compared with 14) said they worked 'at home'. And when a check was carried out in terms of two combinations of responses:

(1) said they worked 'from home', and used 'at work', but would not say they were 'at home',

and (2) said they worked 'at home', did not use 'at work', and would say they were 'at home',

it was found that whereas equal numbers of men and women (seven of each) responded with the first combination, only two men but eleven women responded with the second. Again, there was the

implication here of the women's closer association with the home, despite the problems with being 'at home'. But there was also the possibility that they have not considered an alternative, or find it difficult to avoid it (one respondent commented that she should try to remember to use 'from home' and not 'at home').

The last part of the question, 17(d), asked *whether they thought the words they used were important, and if so in what way*. Responses were categorized as before. The categories and scores (totals and breakdown) were:

<b>A</b>	<b>REAL/SERIOUS WORK</b>	<b>34</b>
1	Make it clear - working	9
2	'Professional'	10
3	Indicate serious/businesslike; high standards	15
<b>B</b>	<b>'HOME' (CONTROL OF)</b>	<b>26</b>
1	Avoid (or problem with) 'at home'/home based	19
2	Avoid home address	7
<b>C</b>	<b>WORDS - CARRY MEANING/INFLUENCE</b>	<b>25</b>
1	For precision/clarity	9
2	Words influence, and are important	11
3	Because using the telephone	5
<b>D</b>	<b>SELF-PRESENTATION</b>	<b>24</b>
1	For image	12
2	Reveal attitudes	5
3	To market self/get work (especially initially)	7
<b>E</b>	<b>CONTROL INTERACTION/MEANING</b>	<b>16</b>
1	Avoid certain phrases	4
2	Avoid/control certain responses/outcomes etc.	12

These categories reflected to a large extent the image management techniques described in response to question 16(b) above. The responses confirmed that words were thought to be important. One third of the respondents associated this with being able to indicate that their work was serious work and that they set high standards (category A). The other categories of response (to do with the control of 'home', precision and influence, self-presentation and the control of meaning) could be seen as related to this desire to have the work taken seriously, as legitimate.

The gender breakdown for the first two categories made an interesting comparison with earlier findings. The breakdown for the sub-category A1, which was to do with making it clear that the person was working (that it was serious work), included over twice as many responses from women as from men (7 and 2 respectively), and the other two sub-categories in A revealed a similar trend but without such a wide variance. But the really significant differences between the responses of men and women was to be found in sub-category B1, which was to do with avoiding the problem of being seen as 'at home' or home-based. Of the 19 responses put into this category 15 were from women. Taken together these differences seemed to suggest that, as before, the women were more likely to experience a problem with being seen as 'at home' and available, and with their work not being taken seriously (but responses to question 17 had suggested that they did not necessarily avoid the term 'at home', or possibly found

it difficult to do so).

Although the numbers were small, the two sub-categories where the score for the men was more than twice that for the women were: first B2, avoidance of the home address; and second, D3, the use of words to market themselves and get work. The first of these seems to suggest a tendency to dissociate from 'home', which would fit in with the earlier findings.

Overall the strategies seemed to be designed to cope with the Ownbase group's contradictory position, in being 'at work' and yet 'at home', and to enhance their market situation - a situation where they had to rely on themselves for marketing their services and obtaining contracts. To this end some care was apparently taken over image management, including the words used.

## **Conclusion**

For the postal survey to serve the purpose of verification, it was important that the interview sample could be shown to be representative of this larger sample. It was found to share the characteristics of the postal survey sample in essential respects (as well as the characteristics of Ownbase's own survey sample). On this basis the results of the postal survey were found to support the analysis of the interviews.

The reasons given by those surveyed for deciding to work from home were analyzed in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors.

Negative feelings about previous employment (for example, a dislike of the organisational environment, and feeling undervalued) and positive feelings about working from home (for example, the desire to be independent) were both important. The way in which the group valued personal *autonomy* and *flexibility* followed logically from this, and was found to be as significant as the interview analysis had suggested. It was associated with being both self-employed and on their own territory, in their own house; and it was in respect of their autonomy that the *Ownbase* group's **work situation** could be said to be good.

The main analysis of the survey questionnaires, which focused on the meanings attached to *home* and *work*, again confirmed the contrasts found in the interviews between the *Ownbase* group's meaning of 'home' and 'proper work', and what they saw as the generally accepted meaning. In each case theirs was compatible with using their home as their place of work; but what they believed to be the generally accepted image of *home* and *work* was not. The implication of this was that those surveyed believed that the public held views concerning *home* and *work* that contradicted, or excluded, their way of working.

The image the survey group gave of the general public's view of 'home' was a close representation of the model epitomised in the values underpinning middle class suburbanization, as described in Chapter 2. It was conservative and traditional; a comfortable domestic retreat that fostered the division of roles between men and women. Its ideological separation from work was expressed

in spacial segregation. But it carried respectability and legitimacy. The Ownbase group's own meaning of home, on the other hand, was an amended one, including an association with work, as well as an emphasis on the family and the idea of a retreat. Their own definition reflected the way they worked, combining work with home.

Similarly, the image the postal survey group presented of the general public's view of 'proper work' was a close representation of the time-bound model of work that was constructed from ideas that emanated from the Industrial Revolution; again described in Chapter 2. It reflected the criteria of rationality and progress, manifested in the liberal economic emphasis on the market and the need for profit. It was essentially a model of employment in an organisation during set hours. It was a rejection of any association with home. It therefore excluded the way the Ownbase group worked. But, like the conservative model of home, it had become accepted as the legitimate model of proper work. The Ownbase group's own idea of proper work, on the other hand, was a broad one that reflected the way they worked. Although money was important to 'earning a living', theirs was not a purely instrumental or materialistic model. It was distinctive in that it suggested an expressive attitude to work that included unpaid work, environmental and caring values, and the idea of fulfilment; also an emphasis on a professional and businesslike approach. Finally, for some, it included the family, in a way that was not thought to be the case with the general public's view of proper work.



In comparison with what they believed to be the accepted model of both *home* and *work*, the Ownbase group could be seen to have 'contravened the legitimate order'. The accepted models of home and work, as they saw them, not only contradicted - or excluded - the way the Ownbase group worked; they were also a contradiction of one another. This double contradiction could be seen as a threat to the legitimacy attached to their work; to the seriousness with which it would be viewed. It could also, therefore, be interpreted as putting them in a potentially weak **market situation**. There was again evidence that this was so, not least in the strategies they used, apparently to enhance their market situation. There were indications, as there had been in the interviews, of image management as well as careful choice of words. In a situation where they were dealing with meanings that had been socially constructed in advance, they seemed to be using strategies designed to alter or control these meanings.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

The socially created 'reality' within which the *Ownbase* group found themselves can be traced back, in a distorted fashion, via the representation of the Industrial Revolution, to the ideals of the Enlightenment. This was the case set out in chapters 2 and 3. Within the resulting modern paradigm - now seen as based on 'organising myths' from 'an "age of revolutions" which were not all that revolutionary' (Wallerstein 1991:50-51) - those who use their home as a place of work represent an aberration, a contradiction. They constitute a partnership of the rational and the non-rational which, in Weber's terms, contravenes the 'legitimate order'. Such a conclusion points to the extent to which certain ideas, concepts, values and interpretations have become taken for granted and reified, in a process that occurs over time:

'In order for one meaning to be regularly produced, it had to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy or taken-for-grantedness for itself' (Beechey and Donald 1985:34).

An acceptance of the modern paradigm, and the accompanying convergence thesis and technological determinism, meant that cultural and historical factors tended to be ignored or suppressed, as were both complexity and subjective understanding. Habermas summed this up in his observation that 'traditional structures' had become subordinated to 'conditions of

instrumental or strategic rationality' (Habermas 1971:98 - see chapter 3). Legitimacy was attached to the manifestations of rationalism and progress, including bureaucracy, science, technology, and clear boundaries. If accepted without question, judgements could only be made on the basis of that which was already established (Marcuse 1964:115-6; quoted in Hearn 1985:17 - see chapter 3). Simmel had, according to Turner, made much the same point when defining 'man' as,

'a being who objectifies life in cultural forms, such as technology, science, art, philosophy and religion, which then demand that life conform to their constraints and standards' (Turner 1990:78).

The 'modern mentality' was, according to Bauman, a replication of the institutions of modernity which, 'struggled for universality, homogeneity, monotony and clarity' (Bauman 1992:188).

The analysis presented in this thesis rests on the proposition that it is the power of the modern, rational, paradigm that has influenced what is 'seen'. Images, meanings, values and ideology have all conspired to construct a 'reality' which defined 'work' in narrow, time and space-bound terms, and rendered 'home' a non-rational, conservative and static concept in a cultural context in which rationality still seemed to be, in Weber's terms, the essential validating idea. The result has been contradictory images of work and home, quite incompatible with using home as a place of work. But these contradictory images were in essence the ones that the Ownbase sample of self-employed independents

believed to be those that were generally accepted. On the other hand, the images they presented of what home and work meant to them were entirely compatible with the use of home as a place of work. The meaning home and work had for them represented a rejection of narrow definitions, and therefore implicitly challenged the prevailing models and underlying assumptions. The *Ownbase* members interviewed and surveyed were an articulate and self-reliant group for whom being in their own house, and being self-employed on the basis of this, meant that their work situation and the autonomy it afforded were particularly valued. They exemplified a group that seems to be well suited to working independently in this way, but could nevertheless find that they had to develop strategies in order to cope with their contradictory position, being both 'at work' and 'at home'.

Self-employed independents who work from home have clearly transgressed the ideological boundary between 'home' and 'work'; also, therefore, the associated boundaries between the traditional and the modern, and between conservatism and economic liberalism. They represent a link with the professional classes who never entirely stopped using their home as their place of work, and a link also with the complexity and diversity that continued to exist but was not always acknowledged. By contrast, conclusions based on 'homeworkers' and 'teleworkers', discussed in chapter 1, are likely to exaggerate the novelty of working from home. For although traditional homeworkers continued to exist, they and teleworkers tend to represent not just either side of the home/work, traditional/modern dualisms, but just

those sections of the workforce that were largely removed into the time-bound factories and offices, respectively.

If it is the case, as argued here, that the concepts and assumptions associated with the modern paradigm have cast the group represented by the Ownbase sample as an anomaly, because of their association with 'home', then it seems logical that some of those identified with post-modernity might be more appropriate. By offering a *deconstruction* of the modern paradigm and its *discourse* the post-modern perspective looks promising. For example, it refers to the 'diminishing significance (of) large organizations, workplaces and cities' (Lash and Urry 1987:14), and the tendency towards a repudiation of the 'organizational rationality' associated with modernism (Ibanez Gracia 1991:6). Similarly, the 'transgression of boundaries' (ibid:15) or 'de-differentiation' (Lash 1990:5), together with spatial 'dispersal' and 'deconcentration from city centres' (Harvey 1989:176) could provide a relevant conceptual framework. Turner has pointed to the 'liberalism' in post-modernism which embraces difference and pluralism (Turner 1990:12); and Thompson has welcomed the 'opening' created by the concept of post-modernity, which permits attention to 'the diverse and contradictory trends which were glossed over by sociological theories of modernity and modernization' (Thompson in Hall et al 1992:226). Complexity and plurality are exemplified in Lyotard's proposal that linguistic practice is the basis of legitimacy (Turner op cit:113), with different sets of codes used for different situations (including home and work); this being part

of a deconstructionist rejection of master-discourses (Harvey op cit:46-47).

Finally, Baudrillard's conception of the collapse of time-space distancing and Harvey's 'time-space compression' describe well the way in which the use of modern technology can diminish the space and time between the home (or any place of work) and the outside world. But despite being closely associated with post-modernity Baudrillard rejects the term itself (Thompson in Hall et al 1992:246) and Harvey seems to accept it, and its ambiguity, with reluctance:

'No one exactly agrees as to what is meant by the term, except, perhaps, that "postmodernism" represents some kind of reaction to, or departure from, "modernism"' (Harvey 1989:7).

The modern models of *time* and *space* were - and are - integral to the constraints associated with the modern paradigm; their deconstruction and critical reconceptualization represents just such a 'departure from modernism'. Most of the relevant critical literature has, however, had little to do with the post-modern perspective as such.

Within this critical literature there are certain themes that can be discerned. The most obvious of these is the way in which dualisms have been created; terms such as 'disembedding', 'decontextualizing' or abstracting are used to describe the way concepts such as time and space have been separated from 'reality' or 'nature'; these can be compared with the house/home,

concrete/abstract, dualism. A further, and related, underlying theme refers to the complexity that has been submerged.

Both Barbara Adam (1990) and Norbert Elias (see Mennell 1989) have addressed the complexity in the concept of *time*, making a significant contribution to a critique of the modern concept of time, but neither takes a post-modern stance. Adam draws extensively on the work of Giddens and G. H. Mead. Mead's concept of sociality (a process of adjustment of the present incorporating the past) opposed the 'unwarranted use of abstraction' (Mead 1977 quoted in Adam 1990:41) in the modern concept of time. Adam questions the dualism of social time and physical time and argues for a reintegration of nature - integral to Mead's sociality (ibid:42) - into the concept of time. She argues for an interdisciplinary approach:

'In order to grasp social time in its complexity, we shall therefore transgress our disciplinary boundaries and endeavour to understand together what theories of social time have separated. We shall explore the unity of that which emerged as a new dualism: social and natural time' (ibid:45).

Elias had earlier made a similar point when he noted the division of academic subjects into 'nature' and 'society' (Elias 1987:9). Taking a developmental approach, he traced the social construction of modern time which has come to be treated as though it were in some sense natural and not a construction.

David Harvey and Immanuel Wallerstein have taken a broadly

Marxist perspective in their critique of modern time and space. Harvey acknowledges complexity and diversity in the use of time and space, but sees this as associated with flexible models of capital accumulation. Capital continues to dominate, according to Harvey, and it does this through its command over space and time, for 'Time and space both get defined through the organization of social practices fundamental to commodity production' (ibid:239). In Wallerstein's work, postmodernity is not an issue; he combines a thoroughgoing critique of the modern (by which he means nineteenth century, industrial and specifically Western) social science paradigm with the case for a world-systems, or global, approach. He suggests that,

'we start down a very difficult, very unsettling road of questioning one of the bedrocks of our intelligence, our certainties about time and space. At the end of the road lies not simplicity but complexity' (Wallerstein 1991:148).

His thesis is that the modern 'rational ideology' has eliminated Time/Space in its multiple forms; an overriding emphasis on 'development' and on an idiographic/nomothetic duality having further discouraged an historical perspective (ibid:135-148).

Of the critiques of modern space, probably the most significant is Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991). Like Elias and Adam, he addresses a dualism that has been created, between 'mental space' and the 'real space' in which we live, and argues for a reconciliation between the two. It is theoretical practice that has, according to Lefebvre, produced a mental space which



is presented as 'extra-ideological' and in this way 'separated from social practice' (Lefebvre trans 1991:6). He sees a need to rediscover the 'truth of space' by 'reversing the dominant trend towards fragmentation, separation and disintegration'; a trend he sees as subordinated to a 'centralized power' (ibid:9). Lefebvre takes a Marxist position, and believes that 'few people today would reject the idea that capital and capitalism "influence" practical matters relating to space' (ibid:9).

So, despite what appear to be some relevant concepts and ideas to be found within a post-modern perspective, much of the critique of the modern paradigm is to be found elsewhere. Furthermore, if, as argued here, the modern 'rational ideology' marginalised the 'home' as essentially non-rational and conservative, the more prominent post-modern conceptualization of home is still essentially non-rational and conservative. The reason for this has to be sought in the conservatism implicit in post-modernity and epitomised by the term 'nostalgia' - an 'appetite for images of the past' (Jameson 1988:104 in Turner op cit:54). Turner sees this as a reaction to rapid modernization, producing a 'nostalgia for the values of a more traditional society' (Turner 1990:7). It includes a renewed interest in traditional institutions such as the family (Harvey op cit:292), and was anticipated in Simmel's 'nostalgic paradigm of anti-modernism' (Turner op cit:8). Thompson refers to the 'museum culture' and the heritage industry, associated with post-modernism; the house has become an 'antique for living in' (Jameson in Hall et al 1992:269), and culture has according to

Jameson become part of commodity production (Thompson, in Hall op cit:269). Habermas finds in post-modern architecture the 'cult of the vernacular' (Rose op cit:89).

The home, associated with experiences, memories, and the sense of self, becomes 'a private museum to guard against the ravages of time-space compression', and an antidote to increased ephemerality and consumerism (Harvey op cit:292). It is cast as a 'haven in a heartless world' (Lasch 1977, in Hall op cit:252). The impression one gets is reminiscent of psychologist Carl Jung's feelings about the Tower he built himself, in which he worked; of this he said, 'I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself' (Jung 1967:214). Clare Cooper's 'The House as Symbol of the Self' (1974), derived from Jung's work, was widely quoted in architectural literature.

It is the 'reconstructive post-modernists' who have, more recently, undertaken to develop a *sociological* paradigm that will 'do justice to the non-rational aspects of the social' (Thompson, in Hall op cit:252). But by projecting an image of the home as once again conservative and non-rational, the result is exactly the same as it was in respect of the modern paradigm. It is, as before, an image that is incompatible with using the home as a place of work.

Apart from its conservatism, however, there are other problems with the post-modern perspective, suggested by Harvey. Drawing on the work of Hewison (1978), he notes the way in which the

heritage industry and post-modernism contribute nothing to an understanding of 'history in depth'; what is offered instead is 'more costume drama and re-enactment than critical discourse' (Harvey op cit:87). This makes two points. First, there is the issue taken up by Giddens (1990), that post-modernity 'has been associated not only with the end of foundationalism but with the "end of history"' (ibid:50). The result is a 'plurality of histories'. This can be compared with the *historicity* advocated by Giddens, and already mentioned in relation to chapter 2: 'the use of knowledge about the past as a means of breaking with it' (ibid:50).

The second point made by Harvey concerns post-modernism's lack of critical reason associated with its relativism and dismissal of what are seen as meta-theories or meta-narratives. He identifies a complacency within post-modernism (op cit:117). Without a critical edge - without the critical reason that will question the taken for granted - it is possible that post-modernity may, like the Enlightenment project before it, become what it rejects: an ideology or dogma; a way of 'seeing' things, complete with 'validating ideas'. It may in turn 'need to be demythologised in the future' (Rose op cit:179), concepts such as plurality and diversity - suppressed by modernity - having taken the place of rationality and progress.

The original Enlightenment promise - to establish new certainties based on reasoned truth - has not been fulfilled. But it held within it not just the instrumental reason that underpinned the

emphasis on rationality, but also the critical reason that would guard against dogma, in the same way that Mills' 'sociological imagination' would also. It is on the basis of its critical reason that Habermas has suggested that the Enlightenment project should not be abandoned. Modernity can, therefore, be seen as 'an incomplete project' (Habermas 1985:8-15).

For much the same reason, Anthony Giddens (1990), together with Ulrich Beck (1992), rejects the concept of post-modernism in favour of advanced, 'radicalized', or reflexive modernity (Giddens op cit). He too notes the contradiction within the Enlightenment; on the one hand, the tendency towards one type of certainty (empirical) replacing another (divine), and on the other a recognition that,

'the seeds of nihilism were there in the Enlightenment thought from the beginning. If the sphere of reason is wholly unfettered, no knowledge can rest upon an unquestioned foundation, because even the most firmly held notions can only be regarded as valid "in principle" or "until further notice." Otherwise they would relapse into dogma and become separate from the very sphere of reason which determines what validity is in the first place' (Giddens 1990:48-49).

For it is 'critical overcoming' that Giddens sees as 'central to the Enlightenment critique of dogma' (ibid:47. There is a self-questioning inherent in modernity, and this is what he means by reflexivity. Modernity is, for him, 'constituted in and through

reflexively applied knowledge' (ibid:39), and this involves both monitoring and response to feedback:

'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character' (ibid:38).

The process is both critical and interactive, therefore. There is an acknowledgement that concepts and ideas generated by the social sciences - Wallerstein's modern social science paradigm - influence what is studied:

'The discourse of sociology and the concepts, theories, and findings of the other social sciences continually "circulate in and out" of what it is that they are about' (ibid:43).

In this way they 'reflexively restructure their subject matter' (ibid:43). This can be linked to the relationship between the knower and the known, between the observer and the observed, discussed in chapter 4, and makes the important point that the concepts and paradigms used and projected by social scientists will impinge on those they study, contributing to a constructed reality; it is not a neutral process. If it is true that 'modernity is itself deeply and intrinsically sociological', as Giddens suggests, and if, furthermore:

'Much that is problematic in the position of the professional sociologist, as the purveyor of expert knowledge about social life, derives from the fact that she or he is at most one step ahead of enlightened lay practitioners of the discipline'

(Giddens 1992:43),

then the question arises as to whether the social sciences have even kept 'one step ahead' in relation to the concept of 'home'. It is only relatively recently that the rational, organisational model of work has been questioned as problematic; but without questioning the non-rational concept of home, the rational model of work as 'not home' cannot be fully understood or challenged. This is so because of the dialectical relationship between them; each can be seen as reciprocally influencing and contradicting the other.

'Work' has been studied in relation to industry, organisations, management, employment, psychology, geography, economics, politics and gender; within, that is, some of the 'modern' disciplines. 'Home', by comparison, has been left largely to the traditional disciplines, especially the arts, poetry and literature, although it has been addressed by architecture and psychology to some extent. It is to be found in the familiar adage, 'home sweet home', and 'an Englishman's home is his castle'; the underlying sentiment making it valuable in advertising and conservative political rhetoric alike. 'Home' can be a room, a house, a county or a country, and can be very emotive. Estate agents sell 'homes' when they sell houses; institutional care is offered in 'homes'; the homeless are apparently not 'homeless' if they are in a hotel room. Confusions abound. But, above all, the word pervades everyday discourse, giving the impression of familiarity; it has connotations of 'homely' cosiness, of feeling 'at home', and

things that are 'home-made' - of the domestic, the banal and the prosaic. The Bed and Breakfast business was seen as mildly comical, apparently for this reason; it offered home comforts.

If that earlier research on Bed and Breakfast was originally suggested as a joke, the subject of this thesis was born of a degree of irritation at the assumptions that seemed to accompany being associated with 'home', and the lack of attention to these. Drawing on a theoretical sample such as members of *Ownbase* - who had crossed the boundary between 'home' and 'work' - put the spotlight on the contradictory relationship between the two concepts; and emphasised the way in which they were linked to the bounded, rational, use of space and time. The *Ownbase* group's own understanding of the terms *home* and *work*, which integrated elements of the modern with the traditional, were both compatible with one another and with using home as a place of work. The images and meanings the *Ownbase* group believed the general public to hold, being narrower and more rigid, were neither compatible with one another, nor with using home as a place of work.

The strategies developed by the group pointed up these contradictions, being a means of coping with them. Their strategies, together with their positive work identities, relatively non-materialistic priorities, and the belief amongst some of them that attitudes towards home as a place of work were changing, suggested the increasing viability of this way of working. But it also suggested that self-reliance and a willingness to market oneself - as 'legitimate' - was necessary,

and that these qualities may be distinctive of self-employed 'professionals'. These observations can be seen in the context of recent reports and literature on the way work patterns and priorities are changing, and the demands these changes make on individuals and companies in a competitive market (see, for example, Mulgan et al 1995; Bridges 1995; Sampson 1995; Fukuyama 1995). They also indicate that the focus on modern technology, as such, is likely to be a red herring. What matters is whether it is 'master or slave', whatever the context. When externally imposed, technology can be a means of surveillance and control over the teleworker as much as the bank employee (Money Programme BBC2 30.9.95). The same is true of flexibility; that is, the crucial question is who is in control of the flexibility (Mulgan and Wilkinson 1995:5; Winkfield 1995:28).

The main implication and conclusion of this thesis is that conceptual systems that settle into ideologies need to be addressed and challenged, particularly if they are 'hardly ever seriously questioned' (Bauman, in Held and Thompson 1989:54-55) and have become 'folk theories'. It is suggested that this is particularly true of 'home', which has come to be defined in effect by exclusion and contrast - as not work, and not rational. Returning to the words of C. Wright Mills, a sociological imagination is necessary, for it is only by its use that,

'men whose mentalities have swept only a series of limited orbits often come to feel as if suddenly awakened in a house with which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar' (Mills 1959:14).



Robert Merton observed that 'misapplied concepts do their damage', but he added a note of optimism when he wrote:

'Men are not permanently imprisoned in the framework of the (often inherited) concepts they use; they can not only break out of this framework but can create a new one, better suited to the needs of the occasion. Yet, at any particular time, one should be prepared to find that the governing concepts can, and often do, lag behind the behavioural requirements of the case' (Merton 1968:146).

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How long have you been working at home?
2. How did you come to be working at home?
3. Was there some kind of a 'trigger' in this process?

### HOME

4. What would you give as a definition of the work 'home'?
5. What does it mean to you? (?sort of image/associations)
6. Do you think your idea of what 'home' means has changed over the years - in your lifetime?
7. Do you think your idea of 'home' is fairly conventional, or is it in some way different from the general idea of it?
8. Do you think of your home in terms of it being a 'place' or 'space'?
9. How 'at home' and relaxed do you feel at home?
10. Would you say you can be your self at home, or do you need to get out to be yourself?
11. What sort of expectations do the other members of your household have of you when you're 'at home'?
12. Do you have any specific responsibilities or roles when you're at home?
13. Would these responsibilities or roles be any different if you were (opposite sex)?
14. What do you think people outside think you're doing when you're 'at home'?
15. Do you share the household work with other members of the household?
16. Do you have any outside help with the housework?
17. What have you got in the way of household technology?
18. Do you see your home - the house - as an investment?
19. Have you build on, or moved because of working at home?
20. Have you any - or would you have any - form of work identification outside the house, e.g. a signboard? (If not, why not?)

21. Do you think a home is suitable for some kinds of work or activities and not others? (expand)

A few final questions on home:

22. How many other interests, activities, hobbies etc. go on in your home?

23. To what extent is this your ideal of 'home'?

24. How relevant is the idea that home is a place of rest, or retreat, in your case?

(25. Did you ever think of it this way?)

26. What do you think about the future potential of homes?

27. Is there some untapped potential - what? (If so, what holds it back ...)

28. Is the situation changing - has the purpose of 'home' changed in any way?

## WORK

29. What is your definition of 'work'?

30. What does 'work' mean to you?

31. What would you give as the general view of what constitutes 'serious work'?

32. Has thing changed over the years?

33. How does this compare with your idea of what constitutes serious work?

34. Do you think that work done at home is recognised as serious work?

35. Do you think there's any difference in the way it's seen when it's a (opposite sex) working at home?

36. How important is your work to you?

37. Is there a clear boundary between other activities in the home and 'work'?

38. If you take a short break when you're in the middle of doing something, are you still 'working'?

39. Would you feel the same if you were out at work?

40. Do you tell people you're 'at work' or 'working', or what .... ?

41. Do you think of yourself as 'at work'?



42. Do you find any problem or ambiguity in these terms?

#### WORK IDENTITY

43. Do you identify with the term 'homeworker' or 'homebased worker', or what would you call yourself?

44. What do you think is the general image of the term 'homeworker' - is it a term you would use? How appropriate is the term?

45. Do you think of yourself as part-time or full-time? (How appropriate do you think these terms are?)

46. Which of these terms would you use of yourself:

entrepreneur

business person

professional

craftsman

manager

47. Do you have a 'portfolio' - does the term mean anything to you?

48. Do you think of yourself as:

a. part of a changing (and perhaps exciting) new pattern of work - with greater flexibility and autonomy;

OR b. part of a peripheral, secondary workforce, and perhaps part-time workforce; less well-paid, less secure than the primary workforce?

49. If someone comes to the door or telephones when you're working, how do you cope with it? What is their reaction?

50. Do you think this situation would be any different if you were (opposite sex)?

51. How well do you think work combines with home?

52. Do you ever think you'd like to go back to working outside home - to going to work?

53. What would you miss if you did? (i.e. what are the advantages of working at home?)

54. What would you be glad to get away from? (i.e. what are the disadvantages of working at home?)

55. Do you think your work would be viewed differently if you did not do it at home, but in a place of work?

56. Would you like the business, or the volume of work, to grow? (optimum size - why?)
57. Do you find that you can control the flow of work, or is that a problem?
58. Do you have many friends who also work at home?
59. What did you see as the advantage of joining Homebase?
60. Do you think a network is a good idea? Would it help you?
61. Do you think there are any personal characteristics that you need to work successfully at home?
62. How would you describe yourself in comparison with this?
63. Do you like working at home?
64. Do you feel more in control than you think you would if you went out to work?
- ANY OTHER THOUGHTS ....

**TIME**

65. How do you think of time? (circular, linear, something that is 'spent'?)
66. How do you use your time? (Are you flexible in your use of time, or do you try to work within certain time limits?)
67. Do you try to keep work time separate from other activities? (How easy is this?)
68. Do you keep a check of how you use your time?
69. Do you work to a timetable or work schedule? (i.e. do you plan your work time?)
70. Do you have (a) less time than you'd like for work, (b) about right, or (c) too much time involved in work?
71. How much do you value your time - do you put a specific value on it?
72. Do you feel that time is what you are selling in any sense?

**SPACE**

73. Where do you work? (?separate/boundaries)
74. How well suited is this house for working in?
75. How would you design houses differently, if more people were

to work (or study perhaps) at home?

76. Are there geographical advantages or disadvantages in working at home, away from other businesses, etc.?

77. Do you think of your work space as predominantly (a) part of home, or (b) part of a world of work? (?private/public)

78. Any problems re neighbours, planning legislation, etc.?

79. Do you think planning legislation should be more flexible?.

### **AUTONOMY**

80. Do you feel ;more independent than you would if you went out to work?

81. How much control do you feel you have over your time, your work space, your work and your home? Are you (a) in control, (b) just about in control, or (c) not really in control?

82. What would you like to get rid of, in any of those areas?

### **LEGITIMACY ETC.**

83. Which of these do you think you have, as far as your work is concerned:

recognition

credibility

respectability

legitimacy

status

Is this less than you would have if you didn't work at home, or more?

84. What do you think about this?

### **BACKGROUND**

Age

How important is income

How long been working at home

How long in full-time work before

2. Since working from home, does there seem to be more time or less time - or the same? (Can you suggest any reason for any difference?)

3. How do you use the 'space' in your house? (Again, flexibly or with clear boundaries between areas?)

4. What kind of working space of your own have you?

5. Please could you give the following a rank order (numbers from 1 to 8), according to which you would use to describe yourself, with the one you would most usually identify with being given 1, and the one you would least usually identify with number 8.

Freelance ☐  
Manager ☐  
Consultant ☐  
Entrepreneur ☐

Professional ☐  
An independent ☐  
Business Person ☐  
Craftsman ☐

Other (please state) .....

6. (a) Are you aware of needing to present a certain 'image' (such that you and your work will be seen as legitimate, professional, credible, etc.) in order to get work? YES ☐ NO ☐ (please TICK ONE ONLY)

(b) If YES, in what ways do you cope with this (e.g. do you use certain words, use headed paper, refer to yourself as 'we', indicate qualifications or credentials, give an appropriate address - or something else)?

(c) Would your occupation/business carry more status/prestige if carried on away from home? YES ☐ NO ☐  
NO DIFFERENCE ☐ (please TICK ONE ONLY)

7. (a) Do you say you work 'at home' or 'from home'?

(b) Do you ever say you're 'at work'? YES ☐ NO ☐

(c) Do you ever say you're 'at home'? YES ☐ NO ☐

(d) Do you think the words you use are important, if so in what way?:

## BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

Occupation/Business ..... Age ..... Sex .....

How long have you been working from/at home? .....

Are there any children under 16 at home? ..... Under 5? .....

Are you self-employed? (i.e. yes mainly; no; partly) .....

What proportion of the household income does your work contribute? (i.e. 50%, 100%, or whatever) .....

Would you like to work outside home again? (i.e. yes, no, under certain circumstances, etc.) .....

How did you come to be working from home? (Please CIRCLE THE NUMBERS of ALL those that apply to you)

1. Wanted to run a business
2. Overheads outside home too high
3. Work developed out of a hobby
4. Preferred working at home
5. Realised could make a living working from home
6. Domestic change (e.g. spouse/child moved out) made it possible
7. Wanted to be independent
8. Felt undervalued in previous employment
9. Took early retirement
10. Little opportunity for personal growth in previous job
11. Received a lump sum severance settlement
12. Qualified for a pension
13. Couldn't get a job in preferred work
14. Began to work at home when baby arrived
15. Had reached ceiling (in promotion/responsibility) in previous work
16. Had been promoted beyond felt capability
17. Had built up contracts while still working outside home
18. Few opportunities for independent thought in previous job
19. Wanted to follow special interest
20. Felt could do better on own
21. Didn't want responsibility of large firm
22. Situation at work became intolerable
23. The organisational culture, or morale, was bad
24. Own authority/responsibility at work was undermined
25. 'Tested the water' before leaving previous job
26. Did course in preparation for setting up on own
27. Worked from home for previous employer
28. Little security in previous job
29. Approached by someone else, who suggested going independent
30. Was working such long hours, had little time for anything else
31. Age precluded getting a job outside home easily
32. Saw opening - took initiative to fill a 'gap'
33. Wanted to invest in house, as capital investment
34. Built on or moved in order to work from home
35. Obtained grant to improve house
36. Inadequate remuneration for work in previous job
37. Couldn't wait to leave job
38. Little opportunity for promotion in previous job
39. Planned to move to working from home very carefully
40. Changed to working from home relatively suddenly (It was not planned)
41. Forced to make a change - made redundant
42. Forced to make a change - some other reason (for example: disability)

From your own experience, do you think work done from/at home is usually seen as 'proper work' (please TICK AS APPROPRIATE):

- |                                |                              |                             |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) by your friends             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) by people you meet socially | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) by people you do work for   | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) the general public          | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Are attitudes changing? Yes ☐ No ☐ (please TICK ONE ONLY)

If YES, in what way, and why?

As someone working from/at home, which of the following do you identify with most closely (please TICK ONE ONLY):

a. part of a changing and perhaps exciting new pattern of work, with greater flexibility and autonomy: ☐

OR

b. part of a peripheral, secondary workforce – mainly less well paid, less secure than the primary workforce. ☐

If you ticked (a.), are there any aspects of (b.) that you would say are true?

If you ticked (b.) are there any aspects of (a.) that you would say are true?

4. (a) What does the term 'flexibility' mean to you (i.e. in relation to your work)?

(b) What does the term 'autonomy' mean to you (i.e. in relation to your work)?

5. How clear are the boundaries between home and work in your case? (Please say as much as you can, giving an example if possible):

6. What is the meaning of 'home', for you – and what associations does it have for you?

7. Do you think there is a generally accepted image of 'home' - if so what do you think it is?

8. What is the meaning of 'proper work', for you - and what kind of associations does it have for you?

9. Do you think there is a generally accepted image of 'proper work' - if so what do you think it is?

10. How do you think of 'time' in connection with your work (e.g. circular, linear, a resource, a commodity, elastic – or what)?

11. How do you use time - i.e. flexibly or within boundaries? (Please say as much as you can, giving an example if possible):